

Running Round the Rows

Memories of a Yarmouth Lad
by
George Alfred Knights



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Transcribed by Alice McEntee

Thanks to Bev Knights

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Coming Soon

A Fiercely Independent Woman

The Story of Ethel Brand MD



About the author

George Alfred Knights was born on 2nd November 1907 on Cobholm Island, Great Yarmouth to George Knights and Bertha nee Powley. He had a sister Gladys (Born 1906 in Reedham) and later a brother Alfred (Born 1910 in Yarmouth). Circumstances caused George to move around several addresses in Yarmouth, including many in the Rows.

George was hard working and had an assortment of jobs while still at school. He was unable to follow in his father (George David)'s footsteps as a carpenter because his father went away to the First World War and was later unable to return home, needing hospital care for the rest of his life. Instead, George found work with Jewson's and being good with figures, was promoted to a timber checker and then to a foreman.

In the 1920s he met his wife to be Emily Leah Vince – always known as Leah - at the Conge Mission and they married in December 1929. Leah was from a family which included well-known local wherry men and a prominent Methodist preacher (Ophir Powley). Sadly Leah died at Nayland Sanatorium in January 1937. She was only 29 years old. George and Leah had one son, Douglas George Walter who was born in early 1931



Figure 1. The wedding of George and Emily Leah 1929. Family photograph

In late 1939, George remarried when he met Elsie Martha Legget (born 3.7.06). A fisherman's daughter, she worked as a machinist at Johnson's shirt factory. During Second World War, they moved to Hyde, Greater Manchester for work, along with many others from Great Yarmouth who had moved with Johnsons when they relocated to the area. George lived in Hyde until he died in April 1997 aged 89.

George had a typical upbringing for a young working class Yarmouth boy in the early part of the 20th century and he relives it here in a series of entertaining, informative, and often moving memoirs of the time. He recalls the names of many families, traders, and local institutions which would be familiar to anyone living in the town in those days. The state of affairs that George recounts, whether for better or for worse, were probably situations that most found themselves in at some time during their life if they lived in and around the Rows. For this was the way of life for George and many like him.



Figure 2 George in the Boy Scouts. He is seated first left in the middle row. Family photograph

Introduction

These memoirs were written in the late 1980s by George Alfred Knights. They form a nostalgic journey through Yarmouth and through time. Highly personal, they have been annotated to try and flesh out George's memories with some detail of the places and people he describes. These footnotes should not distract from what is a lovely and evocative picture of a time and environment long gone.

A few reading these memoirs will have walked the same streets as George, more will remember them as they were turned to dust by the Luftwaffe and the council but for most, this will paint a picture of the time and place their parents, grandparents and even great grandparents grew up in.

There are some pages missing later in the text. This has been marked but there is nothing we can do to recover them.

Photos have come from the family or have been taken from the internet. Where possible, copyright has been credited but often it is difficult to find this information. We apologise if we have breached anyone's copyright but it is done with good intention. This book has not been produced for profit but will be freely available online for anyone who is interested. Should any printed copies be produced they will be sold at a price that is simply enough to recover the printing costs.

We have tried to maintain accuracy as far as possible. If George has made an error in his writing, this has been corrected in the footnotes rather than editing out his own words. Some streets – notably George Street – have been renumbered but we have used the number they would have been at the time George was writing about.

We are grateful to Alice McEntee for transcribing the original manuscript. Now all we ask is that you read and enjoy

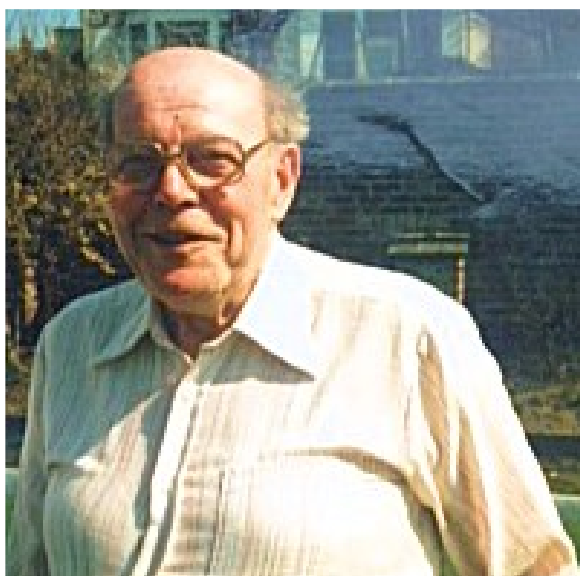


Figure 3 George later in his life. Copyright family

An Act of God

I was born at number 46 Cobholm Road¹, Cobholm Island on 2nd November 1907. I can remember several minor things happening while I lived there.

I lived in a terraced house and the front room floor was lower than the pavement. Everyone had to step down into the room when entering. During a very heavy rain or when the River Yare overflowed its banks, our house became flooded. My mother and father had to bale the water out the best way they could and dry the carpet and rugs. I don't know if they received compensation, as it was called "An Act of God". The river overflowed several times, mostly because of spring tides or very high winds. Several parts of Cobholm, Southtown and Gorleston were often flooded. This was eliminated when a wall was built on both sides of the river banks.

My Father, the Carpenter

I had the good fortune of having a very good and caring mother and father. Both were very hard working parents and loved their children. My father was a carpenter and it was the custom in those days for the eldest son to follow in the same trade as his father. My father followed his father and my father wanted me to follow his. I was very excited when I was told I would be a carpenter when I was older. My father gave me plenty of encouragement.

He often took me with him when he was working near to where he lived. He had a big job repairing some property which belonged to Saul's Timber Merchants². This included making a pair of very heavy stable doors. Everything, he had to do on his own; saw the timber to size, plane it by hand (which was very hard work), match all the mouldings, skirtings, architraves, many of the door frames (which had nearly rotted away), window frames, fascia boards and beading of various types. Some of these had to be made by hand with his own moulding irons, as this was part of the carpenter's job. Finally, he had to fit the stable doors. These were too heavy for him to manage on his own and he had to get some help from a timber yard labourer.

I was very pleased when my father sent me to fetch him some nails and screws from his tool box. I was only six years of age at the time and my father was pleased and proud of me knowing the different nails and screws. I was on top of the world, watching my father using all the different tools and thinking that one day I would be doing the same as a big carpenter was doing. But owing to circumstances later in life, I was unable to follow my father and become a carpenter.

¹ Cobholm Road ran from Mill Road through to Isaac's Road. Part of it remains today but 46 has been pulled down.

² Saul's operated from a site on Saw Mill Lane, Cobholm for over 50 years. Thomas Saul was a Justice of the Peace and a member of Park Baptist Church who feature later in this story.

Press Flour Mills³

On one occasion when I was having a walk with my father, he took me past Press Flour Mills and to my amazement I saw my Uncle Alfred, my father's brother. He was looking out of the window on the fourth floor and waving. He had noticed us walking past and was trying to attract our attention. He was covered with flour and looked like a snowman. I did not know he had to work in those conditions. Whenever I saw him, he was very smartly dressed. In those days it was not compulsory for an employer to install a powerful extractor but most firms had them when the dust was very thick. My uncle seemed to be happy and satisfied with the conditions as he was general foreman for quite a number of years.

On one special Saturday during the summer, all the male staff of Press Flour Mills had a day trip. They would hire a wherry and reorganise the deck and hold, and place chairs and tables in a convenient position for the men. They would all set sail across Breydon Water and up the river to Reedham where they would make fast at the Quayside of the Lord Nelson.

As soon as they arrived, they would hurry inside the hotel for a pint or two of ale and some refreshments. After the interval and waiting for the tide to change, they were ready to sail back to Yarmouth. But not before most of the men had emptied their pockets of all the coppers which they would throw up for the Reedham children to catch, amidst much cheering and waving. Then, they would set sail for Yarmouth. They arrived home singing and accordion playing after a most pleasant day out.

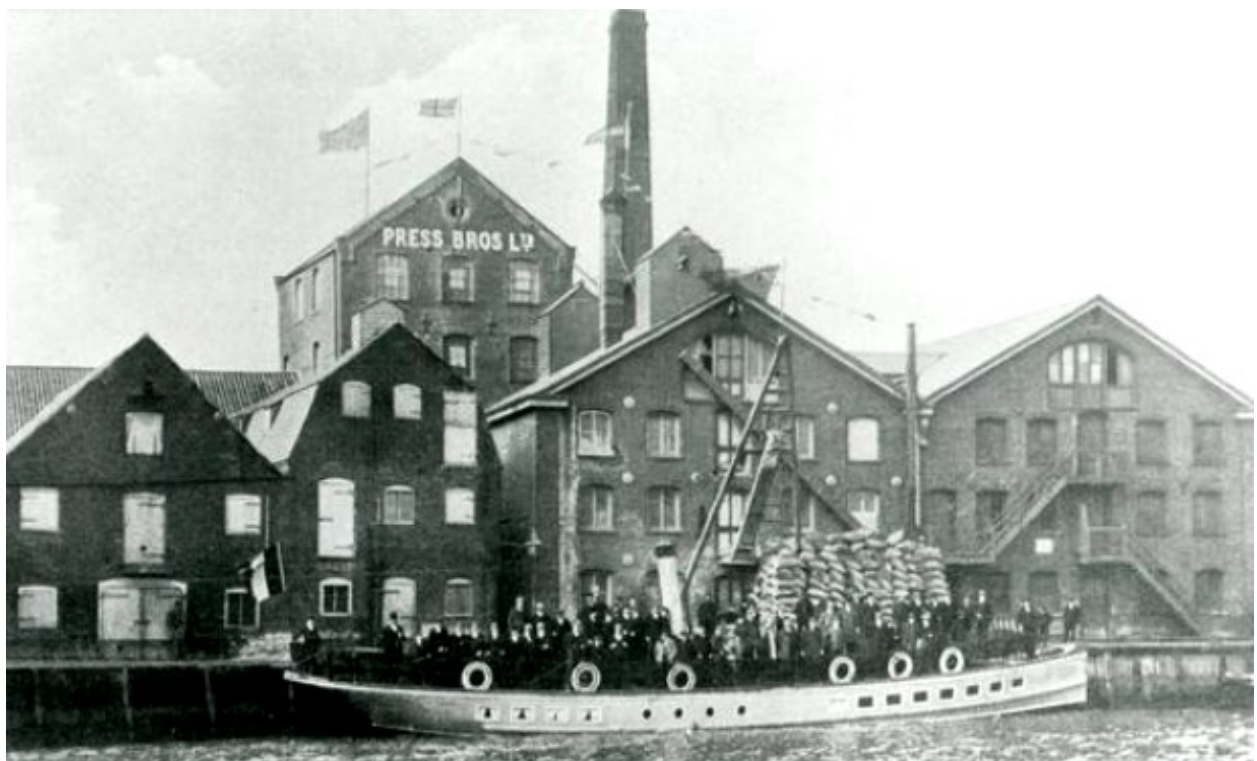


Figure 4 The Press brothers mill on Southtown with a pleasure boat moored up alongside

³ Press Bros. roller flour mill was built around 1845 and stood by the river at Southtown. The firm also owned many of the windmills in the locality but suffered devastating losses through fires at the end of the 19th century.

Flooded Out

Soon after yet another flood, we moved from Cobholm to number 15, Row 116 which went from King Street to Middlegate Street. At the King Street end was Campling's Laundry⁴ and Skippen's Drapers and Ladies Clothiers⁵. At the Middlegate Street end were Wheeler's Gent's Outfitters and Seaman's Barbers and Hairdressing Saloon.

SKIPPINGS & Co.,
DRAPERS, Etc.,
133, King Street (Opposite Gas Office.)
Special Perfect Fitting Corsets, 1s. 11½d.
and 2s. 11½d

The barber's Saloon was a very good one and lather boys were employed to prepare the customer ready for the barber to shave. The barber always used a cut-throat razor. This was kept sharp by using a stropping strap. There was no such thing as a safety razor in those days. The barber was always an expert at his work. The lather boys kept the floor clean and free from hair, ready for the next customer.

A short distance away in Middlegate Street was another barber's shop. It was owned by Mr Harry Davis⁶, who was also known as the Mad Barber. He was very quick as a barber and also a very good hairdresser. Harry Davis was one of the old school and he was a shrewd business man. His shop was part barber's saloon, part tobacconist, gents' sports outfitter, toy shop and fishing tackle supplier. The fishing tackle department sold lug worms and when these were sold they were counted out one by one. "Have you a tin?" he would ask. He also sold the Evening News.

I bought a pair of football boots from Harry on Christmas Day morning 1920. The money came from tips I had collected from customers where I delivered papers. I was playing for Yarmouth School Boys against Gorleston School on Boxing Day morning on Wellesley Recreation Ground. The boots nearly crippled me. Harry Davis said I should have stretched them first.



⁴ Campling's were established as Dyers and French Cleaners on Kings Street in about 1870. They moved to Southtown in the early part of the 20th century and continue trading today.

⁵ I suspect this is Skipplings & Co. Drapers at 133 King Street. The shop is still there and is currently an art gallery

⁶ Harry certainly was a 'character'. Fined for 'showing a light' in 1916 he was charged with absenteeism from his regiment the following year. He nevertheless built a successful business on Middlegate selling everything from motorcycles to complete sea fishing outfits. He was also a champion fisherman.

Starting School

When we moved to number 15, Row 116, my sister and I were sent to St. George's Infant's School. We both liked it and when we met the other children, we soon became friends.

We didn't know that our father was a relation of our teacher until one day when she told us that he was her cousin. Her name was Kitty Gillings. She was a very kind teacher and all the children liked her. She was also very friendly with the other teachers.

Kitty Gillings gave us both an orange for Christmas. This was our first Christmas present. We did not receive many presents at Christmas as my mother and father had a bit of a struggle to manage with only my father's wage to keep us all. Sometimes, during the winter, he was out of work and didn't receive any dole from the Labour Exchange because he was self-employed.

On Christmas Eve we hung our stockings up for Father Christmas, added with a note telling him what we would like for Christmas. We all tried to keep awake waiting for him to come to our house but didn't see him. We all fell asleep in the end. My brother and I got a toy soldier each. My sisters each got a toy or a teddy. We all got some sweets, some nuts, an apple and an orange. We only had one room downstairs which had Christmas trimmings and a tree

One thing my mother worried about was cooking the Christmas puddings in the copper where she had been washing clothes. She had to empty the copper and refill it with clean water.

New Schools

After Christmas, I was transferred to Daniel Tomkins School⁷ which was at the corner of Nelson Road and St George's Road. There were only boys at this school. I didn't like this school as it was too far from where I lived. Also, the playground was too small. It was the same length as the school but only about ten feet wide. It was covered with cobble stone and it was very easy to fall when we were playing. We only had short knickers and when we fell we cut our knees.

I didn't attend Daniel Tomkins School very long before I was transferred to Nelsons Boy's School, next to Nelsons Girl's School on St Peters Road (known by local people as Jetty Road). This school was a much better school. It was much larger and had a much larger playground. The boys were able to play football, cricket or rounders with a soft old tennis ball or rubber ball during play-time break.

I hadn't been attending this school very long before I got the cane because I was cheeky and answered the teacher back. The cane didn't hurt very much except when it hit the finger tips. It didn't do any damage and we soon got over it.

The Nelson Schools were about five hundred yards from the jetty where Lord Nelson landed after one of his victories. The schools were named after him. He was the most successful admiral, a great sea Lord and the country's hero.

⁷ Daniel Tomkins Council School formerly the Great Yarmouth British School. Mr and Mrs Daniel Tomkins had previously run the Sutherland House School for Girls.

After Lord Nelson passed away in 1819, a monument was built on the South Dene in his honour⁸. It is about one hundred and fifty feet high, with a spiral stairway. A figure of Lord Nelson is situated at the top⁹, facing west. It is reported in history that most of the people at that time in Great Yarmouth complained because Lord Nelson was facing west. They considered that he should be facing east towards the sea because he was a great sea lord. By facing west he was looking over his birthplace in Norfolk. The controversy is still argued over by the local inhabitants.

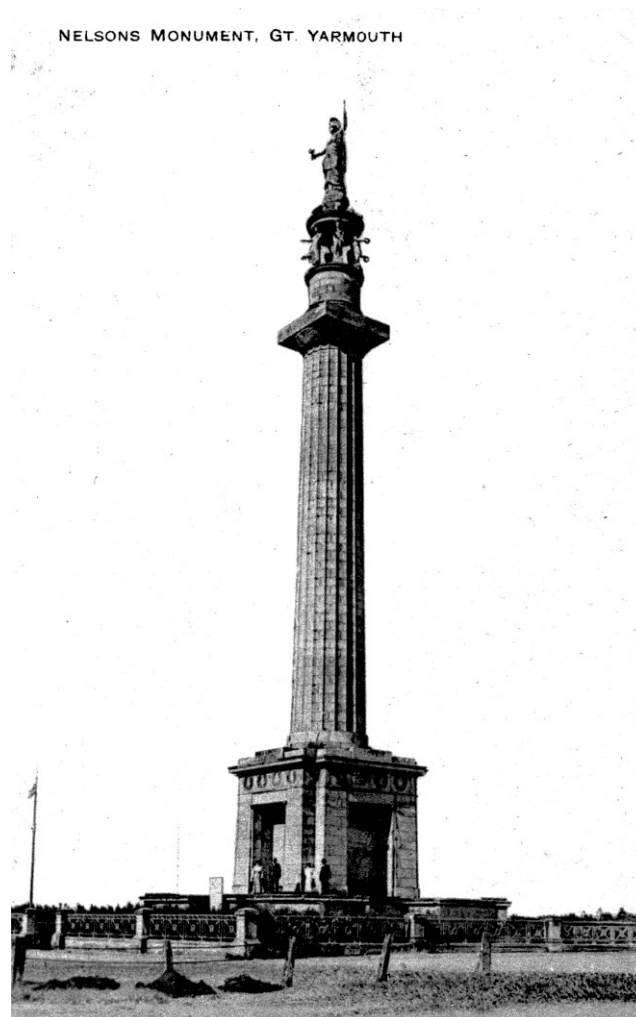


Figure 5 The Norfolk Naval Pillar

⁸ Nelson of course died in 1805 and the monument – the Norfolk Naval Pillar – opened in 1819. It remains on the South Denes to this day although Britannia and other parts have been swapped out with fibreglass replacements

⁹ It is actually a figure of Britannia

Getting Around Yarmouth

Great Yarmouth did not have many ways for the public to travel. They could travel by bicycle, tramcar, horse drawn cabs and brakes with three or four horses. The brakes were only used during the summer, by the visitors, on day or evening trips to a village near to the town, which had a very public house.

Wagonettes were also very popular for a day trip when the sun was shining and the passengers were singing. If it was raining during the trip, it would not be very pleasant. Some of the brakes and wagonettes had a very good cover which also covered the sides. Some were not so good. The rain would get through the sides and the people were glad to get back home.

Some shops were noted for cycle hire, by the hour, day or week. There was very good business at the weekend among the shops who had a hire service. I think the best two were Overill¹⁰, in the Market Place and Gibbs¹¹, Northgate Street. Both had good sales, repairs and accessories.

The most popular places to visit at the weekend were Ormesby Green, Ormesby Broad, Fritton Lake, Oulton Broad and California Beach, where people were to be found bathing and playing about in the nude (this was reported in the local papers).

Some cycles had solid tyres, which was not very pleasant for riding over rough ground, although you couldn't get a puncture. Three wheel bikes were obtainable. A very well-known doctor, named Doctor Timothy¹², used one on his visits to patients, mostly in the rows. He always had a black bag on his front lamp bracket. Some doctors had their own pony and trap and Doctor Whylliss¹³ had a beautiful grey mare which was well known in the town.

Horse drawn cabs were very popular but most of these were near to a railway station and the residents couldn't afford them. They did good business with the summer visitors though.



¹⁰ Alfred G. Overill's Cycle and Motor Cycle Depot at 51 Market Place or possibly his son Humphrey who succeeded him

¹¹ Probably the business of Charles Arthur Gibbs, cycle agent, who was declared bankrupt in 1895 but the business may have continued under the same trading name, or Gibbs may even have started trading again.

¹² Dr P.V. Timothy M.R.C.S., known as the Poor People's Doctor, died in April 1919

¹³ I think this must be Dr William Wyllys or his brother Henry who shared a practice in Yarmouth. Both were competent horsemen.

Living by the Brewery

After living for a few years on Row 116, my family moved to number 6, Row 21 which was from Howard Street to George Street. Row 21 had houses on the South side of the row only. Lacon's Brewery¹⁴ was on the full length of the North side. The row was not a very wide row. At the George Street end it was only six feet wide and at the Howard Street end it was twelve feet. Part of the North side at the George Street Entrance was the boiler house with the entrance to the boiler in George Street. At the Howard Street end, where the row was wider, horses and carts would use this as the entrance to the brewery. The main entrance was on Church Plain. All the horse and cart traffic would always be loaded with grain for the brewery. Some would bring a load of hops out.



Figure 6 The entrance to Lacon's Brewery

The side of the brewery was facing the front of the houses in Row 21 and in parts was only about six feet away. This did not allow much light into the houses. Built into the wall of the brewery, at various distances, were large windows with stained glass, to keep the public's eyes out. They were about six feet from the ground and each window had a fairly wide sill.

¹⁴ Started on Church Plain by Jeffrey Ward on in about 1640 it passed through death and marriage to John Lacon by around 1760. The Falcon Brewery – as it was properly known - expanded across the rows west of Church Plain. It closed in 1968 and was demolished in 1974.

The row had one gas-light, situated in the centre of the row. One evening, my mother was returning home after doing some shopping. She was alone. As she reached the windowsill opposite my neighbour's house, my sisters and brother and I, who were indoors, heard my mother scream. We all rushed outside and found our mother very upset and every frightened. A rat had jumped from the windowsill and landed on her shoulder. We reported this to the brewery and were told, perhaps, it will never happen again.

All the neighbours in the row were very friendly with each other and most of them kept their troubles to themselves. But in this time of need, they were always ready to help. Our row was like one big, happy family, with no class distinction. This was the way that most people lived in the rows. Sometimes, in some of the rows, some of the neighbours had a trivial argument but always finished on good terms. Sometimes the people who lived on the rows would have a party for the children. The row would be gaily decorated with flags and bunting and all the children had a good time.

Most of the people who lived in a row did not have a bathroom and they had to wash in a bath tub which was brought near to the coal fire. The water was filled into saucepans and these were put on the fire to get hot for our bath. Sometimes, it was inconvenient for our family, for besides my mother, she had four girls and two boys, so we had to wash on separate nights. My mother was a good organiser but she was very strict and would not let us miss our bath but we all managed okay.

I was very pleased when I was eighteen because I could join the Liberal Club and have a real bath on Friday nights.

I remember about sixty years ago, I was having a bath in the Liberal Club when someone banged on the door shouting, "Hurry up George, Jewson's are on fire". I worked there. I could do nothing about it. I was put out of work for three months. I was one of the lucky ones. I was employed rebuilding the works after the fire¹⁵.



Figure 7 Fire at Clarke's flour mill, Southtown

¹⁵ This devastating fire took place in June 1928. It began in R. H. Clarke's flour mill on the Southtown quayside and quickly spread to the timber merchant.

Roast on Sunday

We who lived in the row were always classed as the poor people who lived in a row. Not many of the upper class would mix with us. I must say, we were as good as anyone. Perhaps we were poorer but we were honest and all ready to help anyone in time of need.

Early every morning, a queue would form outside a confectioners shop in the market place where all the cased and pastries from the previous days could be sold as over-days and very cheap. Most people at the back of the queue would have to wait a long time for their turn and sometimes, when they reached the counter, everything was sold. The name of the shop was Edwards¹⁶. It was the best known shop in Yarmouth. These cakes and pastries were a real treat for most people as the wages in those days were not very high and the majority of people could not afford such luxury.

Every Sunday, we had a good dinner. Our mother bought a nice piece of beef, or pork or sometimes, a rabbit, which she prepared and put in a baking tin. She then took it to Downing's baker¹⁷ shop which had a very long wall oven and would cook a dinner for nearly all the families in the area who lived near to the shop. At one o'clock, a crowd of customers could be waiting for their dinner to be drawn out of the oven, all cooked and ready for the table, for about six pence each.



¹⁶ Frank William Edwards of 10 Market Place

¹⁷ This is probably R. Downing's bakery at 95 George Street

Down on George Street

George Street was more of a residential street with a few shops. It was parallel with Howard Street and North Quay. The entry at the north end was by Fullers Hill and at the south end, Hall Quay. Commencing at Fullers Hill end of George Street, were about twenty houses, two shops and one public house. There were five rows from Church Plain to George Street and two rows from George Street to North Quay, which was near to Saint Andrew's Church¹⁸.

Lacon's Brewery was on both sides of George Street for about one hundred yards. The Brewery was a very large building starting at Church Plain, to North Quay, with George Street cutting through the middle. On the other side of the street were houses. Some were situated at the end of a passage or opening from the row which the local people called yards.

At the North Quay entrance, by the railway line, was Vauxhall goods yard. Trucks or box wagons would be shunted from the main line. The branch line was a junction from the main line and went straight across the quay into the brewery. The trucks of the box wagons would be collected every day. It was a very good service for Lacon's.

Adjoining the brewery on the east side was a boiler house fired by coal. Several men were engaged night and day as the boiler house staff of stokers, fitters, engineers etc. The boiler house was part of Row 21 although the entrance was in George Street, opposite Row 18. Every night, a local policeman on his beat would drop in and have a cup of tea and a chat with the two men who were on duty for the night.

At the top of Row 19, at the George Street end, was a rag and bone warehouse where the neighbours sold their old clothes for about a shilling. Also for sale was firewood, paraffin, buckets of coal (which was the largest amount they could afford to buy at any one time, things were very bad and the war was still on).

Next door was a public house called The Duke of York¹⁹. This was a real family house as most of the neighbours who could afford it were customers. It had a singing room with a piano.

Parker's poor man's lodging house was a godsend to some of the regulars as some had to sleep rough. While they were staying at the lodging house all the men seemed to get along with each other. I supplied men with Sunday newspapers and did not always get paid for them. I left them early and when I came back for the money, they were gone.

Near Row 21 was a very good shell fish shop which also sold bloaters, haddock and shrimps. The name was Holmes²⁰. Next was a boot and shoe repairer and a public house at the top of the Conge was named The Red Lion²¹. About 20 houses were in the Conge and also two general shops, two public houses, a house with a large window where shrimps were sold and several warehouses (one was a centre for the distribution of daily papers). A Gent's hairdresser was at the top of the Conge.

¹⁸ The Wherryman's Church. Consecrated in October 1860, it closed in 1961

¹⁹ At 95 George Street, the pub was first included, then omitted from the Ministry of Health slum clearance plan but was nonetheless compulsory purchased by the Corporation in 1935.

²⁰ George Martin Holmes of 20 George Street

²¹ I suspect George means the Golden Lion which was at 24/25 George Street opposite the Conge. The only Red Lions were on the Market Place and down in Middlegate. Its licence was surrendered prior to 1930.

Next to The Red Lion was a row²² and then a large area where a malt-house and several houses were demolished with part of the outside walls left standing. It was known by the locals as the Old Malthouse. This is where the policeman always lost us when he was chasing us. Two houses from the Conge was a very old empty shop and at the corner of the row was Downing's Bakers²³ and Confectioners. The shop was owned by father and son. This is where most people living in the area had their Sunday dinner cooked.

Mr Downing senior had a daughter who married Billy Read²⁴ who was employed at Jewson's as a joiner. He was a friend of mine. They lived in a house in George Street at the Fullers Hill end. I supplied them with the Sunday papers.

The Conge Mission²⁵ was very important to me in my life and I spent a lot of time there. I married a daughter of Mr and Mrs Vince who lived in the house next to the Mission. Her name was Leah. We had one son, Douglas. Unfortunately, she died after an illness when she was quite young. She was a lovely wife and a good mother, and she was very sadly missed. Her father and brother Walter were drivers of Corporation steam engines for many years. Brother George was a professional golfer. He served his apprenticeship at Caister Golf Club and after that time took a position at Gorleston Golf Club. After making it a larger club with more holes, he went to a club in Wolverhampton as the club's professional.



Figure 8 The Conge Mission Rooms

²² Row 25

²³ As mentioned earlier this is R. Downing's bakery at 95 George Street

²⁴ William H. Read married Ada Downing at Yarmouth Q4 1921

²⁵ The Conge Mission was formed by the Park Baptist Church c.1887. It was at 94 George Street on the north east corner of the Conge

On the opposite side of the Mission in George Street was a public house known as The Wheel of Fortune²⁶. The landlord's name was Yaxley²⁷. Next was a grocer, Skoyles²⁸, then Adcock's sweet shop, the firewood shop, fish and chips, Hurrell's²⁹ general shop, a fishmonger's, Page the Baker's³⁰ and a few more general shops.

Phillip's pawn shop was also on George Street... It has a large number of regular customers who would pawn the best Sunday suit on a Monday morning and fetch it out of pawn on Saturday ready for Sunday. This was known as looking after your best clothes. Some people were so poor, they could not keep away from the pawn shop. This job was mostly left to the wives.

The pawn broker would lend money on practically anything; clothes, boots, shoes, household goods, watches, rings and all kinds of jewellery. It is quite easy to pawn anything. All you do is ask the pawn broker for a certain loan and if the goods are worth that amount of money, he would give you a ticket with the conditions printed on. You would have to pay interest on the loan and the interest to date. You had to get your goods out of pawn before a certain date or the pawn broker could sell your goods. Some people did not get any other type of assistance.

A very well-known shop in George Street was Mitchells where a customer could buy any kind of crockery, some new, some nearly new, tea sets, dinner sets, odd cups and saucers, plates, dishes and all kinds of jugs and ornaments, very cheap. It was a very good shop where no-one could go wrong.

Opposite Mitchell's shop, there was a large opening which had about thirty terraced houses. The name was Coronation Terrace³¹. A shop was at each corner and then houses in George Street. The next shop was a very first class boot and shoe repairer named Richard's. This was a very good shop and people came from all over the town with repairs. The next house was occupied by Mr and Mrs Thompson and family. My brother Alfie married one of the daughters.

The next opening after a large number of houses was Morley's Place. A work mate of mine who played in our football team at Jewson's lived in a house in Morley's Place. His name was Eddie Fryer and he was a lorry driver. A confectioner's shop was next in George Street.

Next to some more houses was a church mission. Opposite was Middleton's warehouse. Next was a barber's shop and then opposite Broad Row was Brenner's Bazaar³², a café, The Mitre public house³³, Aldred's jewellers³⁴, Dyer's picture framer's³⁵, Atkin's hardware and builder's merchant, and a grocery shop.

²⁶ 29 George Street on the corner of Row 30 (Also known as Wheel of Fortune Row. It closed in 1939

²⁷ Daniel Yaxley held the licence from around the turn of the century until 1921.

²⁸ Mrs Mary Skoyles, 30 George Street

²⁹ Robert Hurrell, 35 George Street

³⁰ W. L. Page, 36 George Street

³¹ Now where the St Francis Way flats are, this terrace was built on an old Malthouse which in turn was almost certainly built on the site of the Carmelite Priory.

³² A chain of gift shops that sold special ranges of postcards and treasures.

³³ On the corner of George Street and Row 48, sometimes known as the Mite Stores sometimes the Mitre Tavern.

³⁴ At 56 George Street, Aldred & son, jewellers, silversmiths and opticians were established in 1795 by Samuel Higham Aldred. They also had a shop on King Street. The George Street shop closed in the early 1930s and they opened a new unit at the entrance to the Central Arcade which was built where the King Street shop was.

³⁵ Dyer's were at 60 George Street. As well as framing pictures they bought old oil paintings presumably just to get the frames sometimes.

Some of the shops in Broad Row were Middleton's newsagent³⁶, Boot's chemist's³⁷, Platten's³⁸, Sennitt's Provisions³⁹ (where all schools purchased the cane. I was sent for it several times.) Bayne's jeweller⁴⁰, Home and Colonial⁴¹, Blyth's tobacconist⁴², Norton's tobacconist⁴³, Green's gents outfitter⁴⁴ and Stead and Simpson⁴⁵. Most of the better cigarettes and tobacco were weighed and sold by the ounce.

BOOTS, CASH CHEMISTS.

All the advantages of co-operation may be secured without trouble by customers dealing with Boots, the Cash Price Dispensing Chemists, who prepare Physicians' Prescriptions and Family Recipes with Pure Drugs at about one-half the usual charges, or equal to an immediate dividend of 50 per cent. on the outlay.

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Hams, already dressed, all sizes, from 2/6 to 8/-

(NO CHARGE FOR CARRIAGE)

³⁶ At No.1 Broad Row was their bookshop and stationers

³⁷ After humble beginnings as a family herbalist shop in Nottingham in 1849, Boots now has 2500 shops across the UK.

³⁸ Plattens were a very well-known drapers started by Thomas Platten on King Street in 1876 moving to Broad Row in 1889. For many they were the school uniform suppliers and when they finally closed in 1998 they were still owned and run by the Platten family

³⁹ Sennitt's pf Yarmouth and Norwich were a grocer's store renowned for their hams. Quite why they diversified out into canes, I am not sure.

⁴⁰ Started by Arthur Bayne, a watchmaker from Norwich, Bayne's were established in Yarmouth at 11 Broad Row. They sold jewellery and false teeth! By the early 20th century it was run by Arthur's son William Joseph whose brother Arthur opened a separate business on Regent Street.

⁴¹ Home and Colonial opened in 11a Broad Row (The previous No. 11 which was in the Brand's drapery business for many decades was spilt when it was sold). A national chain of grocers who started on the Edgware Road in London in 1883, had by 1903, established 500 shops across the UK. They specialised in tea and remained successful into the fifties. As the sun set on the empire they morphed into Allied Suppliers and were eventually bought out ending up as part of Safeway UK

⁴² Originally believed to have begun trading as a spice shop in 1780 it became a tobacconist and snuff retailer which was purchased by Robert Blyth about 1850 when it took his name. It will be forever known for the wooden Scotsman that stood outside advertising snuff

⁴³ A rival tobacconist who eventually bought out Blyth's business in the 1930s, Alfred Norton had been trading since at least 1874 and the business was continued by George Norton.

⁴⁴ Charles Green traded at 19 Broad Row from at least 1881. A gent's outfitter, he specialised in seaman's outfitting in direct competition with the nearby Brands.

⁴⁵ Stead and Simpson originally came together to run a currier's shop in Leeds in 1834. By 1855 they had expanded to Daventry and Leicester and were best known for making shoes. Their first retail shops opened in the early 1870s and by 1889 they had shops in over 100 towns across the UK including Yarmouth

A Barrowful of Drunks

In Howard Street there were eight public houses and one was very popular with the crew of ships which were berthed in the river at the town hall end. Some men would spend all their spare time there, especially during the evenings with the piano playing and in the company of some well-known females.

Some of the men were foreigners and appeared to have plenty of money. This attracted some of the local women who joined them in having drinks. Some of the women were looking for men and this sometimes started an argument among the men. Sometimes a fight would start and the police were called. As soon as the police arrived, the fight would stop and all were friends again.

One local policeman was a wrestler who lived at Cobholm. His name was PC Bean⁴⁶ and I have seen men pleading with him to let go of them. He always got his way. He only let go when they screamed that they had had enough. Some of the men were locals and were well known by the police as trouble starters. They would be arrested for fighting, taken to the police station and put in the cells for the night. The morning after, when they were sober, a constable took them their breakfast. Sometimes this did not go down very well and the tray would be tipped over, along with the contents, all over the constable on duty. I must say this did not go down very well either. They got paid back with interest and often appeared in court with a few marks.

Some of the drunks were taken to the police station on a barrow as they were too drunk to walk. One night I saw two policemen hiding behind the pillars at the entrance of Lacon's Brewery. I saw and heard a drunk singing. When he was up to the doorway, he was pulled in and frog-marched to the police station.

Howard Street had a lodging house for the poor. Some would stay one night and move on the next morning. Some were regular lodgers. Further along was Edward's Shellfish and Fruiterer⁴⁷. Edward's son George⁴⁸ played football for Aston Villa. I once met George at Maine Road, Manchester City's football ground. He offered me a ticket which I refused as I was already a City season ticket holder.

At the corner of Row 26, Beevor the Baker⁴⁹ had a hot wall. This was right next to where my friend Bertie Salmon⁵⁰ lived. Several of the boys lived in the same row and having a hot wall, where we all met every evening for a chat and a cigarette, everyone in the row was quite happy. We were all considered part of the row. Sometimes, a policeman would ask us to move, which we all did but came back when he had gone. Sometimes, a policeman would come waving his truncheon. We all knew it was Charlie Bacon⁵¹, the only one who was aggressive. We would all run away from him shouting "Old Charlie, you can't catch us". He was unable to catch us as we knew the rows better than he did. When he had gone, the neighbours gave us the all clear.

⁴⁶ Probably PC George Henry Walter Bean (1886-1962), son of PC Henry Bean (1860-1909)

⁴⁷ George Edwards (Senior) (1891-1970) was trading at 79 Howard Street South from at least the early thirties

⁴⁸ George Robert Edwards (1918-1993) was a striker for Norwich City before joining Villa in June 1938. He played for them for 13 years scoring 34 league goals

⁴⁹ Arthur Henry (Harry) Beevor, trading at 58 Howard Street since at least 1896, was also known as Cosh. The Beevors were an old and respected Yarmouth family and Arthur was mayor in 1930. One of his engagements was escorting the Prince of Wales when the new Haven Bridge was opened in 1930

⁵⁰ Living No. 18 Row 27, aged 5 at the time of the 1911 census

⁵¹ Charles Richard Bacon (6 Apr 1893-30 Aug 1961) was in the army (Royal Garrison Artillery) before joining the police force

Life in the Rows

Most of the rows were known by the local people by the name of the shop or public house which was at the entrance of the row even though every row had a number from number one to one hundred and forty⁵². One row in the market was known as The Two Necked Swan⁵³ which was the name of the pub at the entrance. All the residents had a name for every row. All the pawnbrokers had a row such as Marshes Row⁵⁴, Porritt and Currey's Row⁵⁵, Phillip's Row⁵⁶, Bartram's Row⁵⁷. Most people used the rows as short cuts.

Milkmen would supply milk to the people who lived in a row every morning from a milk churn on the side of his barrow. He would carry a milk can with three or four gallons from the churn and refill it whenever required. He would walk through each row shouting "Milk, fresh milko", or "skimmed milk, a penny a pint". One milkman was very well known by his very loud voice, he was known as Milky Carter.

Another good row salesman sold paraffin, from a four or five gallon can. Nearly everybody bought paraffin as most of the people who lived in a row had either a candle light or a paraffin lamp.

Some shops sold milk, dairy products, eggs and paraffin. Practically every item sold from the shops was loose and had to be weighed. Very few items were prepacked. Tea, sugar, flour, rice, butter, margarine, dried fruits, biscuits, sweets, chocolates, some makes of cigarettes and pipe tobacco had to be weighed.

One or two rows near Friar's Lane were famous as fish curing yards, mostly kippers. A very famous shop was situated on South Quay, close to Friar's Lane. This was Woodger's⁵⁸ kippers, were we could go and buy sixpenny worth of broken kippers for our family tea.

Some clubs were situated in the rows. One was very popular as a boy's boxing club of which I was a member from 1921.

⁵² The rows were first numbered by the Corporation in 1804 but people continued to refer to them by their name(s) for years afterward. There are in fact 145 numbered rows and two without numbers (Broad and Market). Some half-rows bring the total up to around 157 although many are lost. Most rows had several names over the years, often at the same time

⁵³ Row 20. The pub stood at 6 Market Place and finally closed in 2007. There are plans to convert it into a shop with accommodation

⁵⁴ Both Row 85 and Row 132 were named Marsh's Row at some point. Frederick Marsh was a pawnbroker and jeweller at 164 King Street so this is likely to be Row 85

⁵⁵ Porritt and Currey were pawnbrokers at 23 & 24 St. Peter's Paved Row West (Row 129) which had many names though I do not have recorded as Porritt and Currey's Row

⁵⁶ Reginald Barcham Phillips (1864-1946) was a pawnbroker, jeweller and general salesman at 86 & 86a George Street. The pawnbroker business was previously his father's who also ran a furniture dealers in Howard Street. What is fascinating is that the family name was actually Mouse and at some point in the latter part of the 19th century, for some reason, they changed it to Phillips. There is no known Phillips the Pawnbroker's Row but Mouse the Pawnbroker's Row was Row 36 which ran between George Street and Howard Street

⁵⁷ John Clarke Bartram established a pawnbroker's business at 132 King Street in 1850. It passed to his son William John Bartram, his grandson (also William John) and great-grandson Reginald William Bartram, a jeweller. It was still in the same place on King Street as late as 1971. There is no recorded Bartram the Pawnbroker's Row though there is a Hastings the Pawnbroker's Row very close by. This probably reflects the number of pawnbrokers in Yarmouth rather than anything else

⁵⁸ John Woodger ran a successful 'kippering' business in Newcastle but in the 1850s decided to relocate to Yarmouth. A strong Liberal, he was involved in many aspects of town life until his death in 1876. His son George (1849-1905) took on the business as did his son Percy Nathan Woodger (1884-1929). He also shared his grandfather's political ambitions being elected in the 1920s albeit as a Conservative

Traffic Jams

Before the motor era, most goods had to be moved by horses and cart, horse and lorry or with a barrow which had to be pushed or pulled by hand. Middlegate Street was a very narrow street with a large number of shops, several business premises and some manufacturing works, including a very large canning company which had a number of barrows, horses and carts and horses and lorries. Some were owned by the shopkeepers and very often they were all trying to get in the same place at the same time. This very often resulted in congestion of traffic and an argument which was soon sorted out, although the shopkeepers were rivals, they were also good friends.

Sometimes railway horse and lorry or railway parcel carts would take goods to Southtown, Vauxhall or Beach Stations. The goods were manufactured at factories such as Johnson's⁵⁹ or Blanchflower's⁶⁰ or were boxed red herring or kippers from the curers.



These goods were sent to districts all over England, Scotland and Wales. Only a few shops had a motor lorry. Both Lacon and Steward and Patteson⁶¹ had steam wagons and would very often deliver to public houses in Middlegate Street. The corporation also had steam wagons for refuse and the street got into a mess when one driver wanted to get where someone else was loading or unloading. But when the steam wagons and also the horses were replaced by motors it was worse. Everything speeded up and pedestrians had to watch their step and keep to the footpath.

Goulder's⁶² bakery shop was situated in Middlegate Street and when a customer bought a loaf of bread it had to weigh two pounds and the baker could not guarantee the loaf would weigh exactly two pounds. So, the shopkeeper had a spare loaf to be cut up to make the required weight and the customer would be given a small piece with the loaf. Not many pieces reached the home as it was all eaten on the way. (This was a government rule and it had to be carried out)⁶³.

⁵⁹ Johnson & son were started by John William Johnson as linen drapers in the mid-19th century. By 1865 he was advertising as an oilcloth manufacturer and this is how the company would make its fortune over the next 150 years. They expanded rapidly across Yarmouth and Gorleston and created Yarmouth Stores with other local manufacturers. The company is still trading today

⁶⁰ Blanchflower were renowned for their bloaters which came in a little tin featuring the image of a Yarmouth fishing boat. They also canned Gorgona anchovies. The tins are now very collectable

⁶¹ The 'other' big brewery in Yarmouth, Steward and Patteson, was founded in Norwich in 1793 and the following year acquired the North Quay brewery of James Fisher. By 1820 further mergers and acquisitions led to the formation of Steward, Patteson and Stewards. In July 1895 they became Steward and Patteson Ltd. They were taken over by Watney Mann in the sixties and the Norwich brewery closed in 1970. It was resurrected as the S&P Norwich brewery (based in Horsford) in 2013 but has no significant ties to the original company

⁶² William Goulder ran the Middlegate Electric Bakery at 51 Middlegate Street with his son, also William. His brother Arthur Edward had his own bakery on Row 141 but by 1939, Arthur's son – Arthur William – seemed to be running the Middlegate business.

⁶³ This is why we have the Baker's Dozen as the baker would make up a thirteenth loaf to ensure he had make-weight bread

Several of the works in Middlegate Street employed quite a large number of full-time workers. Among these works was Dowcra⁶⁴, a firm very famous for its works in Middlegate Street, which was also a wholesale warehouse, for the sale of all kinds of confectionery which was made in the same block of buildings.

The firm also had a very popular, large open shop in Regent Road where the customers and visitors could watch the Dowcra employees making Yarmouth Rock which was stated as having Yarmouth all the way through.

The Machine Girls

Johnson and Sons Ltd. were very large employers of both male and females. Quite a large number of the female labourers were sewing machinists, who made all types of rainwear for the government contracts for the army, navy and airforce. Also, there were several mechanics and most were expert sewing machine mechanics. The sewing machines had to have very quick and expert attention as most of the ladies were working on piece work or on a bonus system and had to rely on the efficiency of the sewing machines for their wages.

Johnsons also had a factory which was situated a Pier Plain⁶⁵, Gorleston on Sea and employed a very large staff including female sewing machinists. One of the lady sewing machinists was my wife, Elsie Legget⁶⁶ and she was an expert machinist and she worked at Pier Plain over 15 years. All I hear was fitting sleeves in shirts and about post machines, so, I knew a bit about making shirts. The main production was for gent's shirts and the firm and several government contracts and many for large private firms.

They were always in full time employment. At the commencement of the 1939 war, most of the staff were transferred to a works in Stockport. This included some from the Great Yarmouth factory, where they ended shirt production. The Stockport brand had a few local people working for them; all the Great Yarmouth and Gorleston people found lodgings with the Stockport people. After a time, some bought houses in Stockport. The factory was situated in the central area of Stockport and the people from Great Yarmouth and Gorleston found some good friends in the Stockport people. We lived in Hyde which was only a short distance from Stockport and my wife and I had friends who would visit us every Sunday. One lady was named Evelyn Jay.

⁶⁴ William Docwra started making sweets at his factory in Middlegate, opposite the Tolhouse, in 1896. In 1922 he opened the shop on Regent Road where customers could watch sticks of rock being made. Amongst his other achievements, the Venetian Waterways were William Docwra's idea. The rock factory – now officially Candigrove Ltd. but still known widely as Docwra – remains in the family being run by William's grandson Stephen public factory Regent Road William D idea for Venetian Waterways

⁶⁵ Known as the shirt factory

⁶⁶ Elsie Martha Leggett born 3rd July 1906. Married George Q4 1939

The Market

About a third of the market place at the south end was rented permanently by the stall holders, and all were well known local people. The various stalls were very popular and included chip stalls, tripe stalls, fish stalls, shell fish stalls, butchers, fruit, greengrocers, provisions, florist, tea and refreshments.

I remember some of the chip stalls were Storey⁶⁷, Brewer⁶⁸, Kelly, Nichols⁶⁹, Thompson⁷⁰ and the tripe stalls were Nichols⁷¹ and Underwood⁷². The tea and cakes stall was Harry Wrights' who was well known for his Nelsons⁷³. Then there was Mrs Hunn who sold flat cakes which were known as Rubber Heels.

PERCY STOREY, chip potato vendor's assistant, was summoned for failing to extinguish fires in two potato stalls in the Market Place.

Sergeant Platten said that on Thursday evening at about 8.10 he was in the Market Place. He found two large fires at the chip potato stalls which were in charge of defendant. There were pans on the fires, but they did not fit and the flames were seen. The front of the stall being open the wind from the west fanned the fire. Defendant admitted being responsible and witness told him he would be reported.

Defendant said he had just been discharged from the army and Thursday was his first night at the stall.

Fined 5s.

When Mr Underwood was serving and chopping tripe he was magic with the knife. One day, when he was serving me, I asked him how he missed his fingers. He told me never to worry about the fingers but always watch the knife⁷⁴.

During the summer when the town was full of visitors, it was absolutely wonderful to see so many people having a meal of chips, sometimes with tripe, being eaten out of a piece of paper with their fingers, and everyone was enjoying them. The same thing would happen again in the evening but this time without the children.

⁶⁷ Probably Percy Henry Storey (1885-1949). Described as a Chip Potato Vendor when medically discharged from the Royal Army Medical Corps in February 1916, Percy took a job as an Assistant on an unnamed stall. On his very first night he was summoned by the police for failing to extinguish two large fires at the Market Place stalls

⁶⁸ Brewer's chip saloon is still serving on the Market today having been run by the Platten family since 1902

⁶⁹ Perhaps the most famous of them all, as their slogan "Nichols Noted Chips and Tripe" proclaimed. As well as the stalls on the market the family ran the restaurant beside the Market Place and shops throughout the town. Frank, Edward and Percy established a hugely successful business passed to their family notably Ivan and Frank Owen

⁷⁰ Started by William Thompson it was run for years by James Thomas Thompson (1901-1977) and was the last of the big four (with Brewer, Kelly and Nichols). James passed it to his daughter then it was sold out of the family

⁷¹ See footnote 69

⁷² Thomas Underwood also had a shop at No. 6 St George's Paved Row East (Row 107)

⁷³ A heavy and rich fruit cake sandwiched between two layers of puff pastry (or shortcrust at the bottom, puff on top). Some suggest that over-day fruit-cakes were used for the filling. Believed to be named in honour of Norfolk's favourite son though they were not necessarily a local speciality being found all over the country as Nelson Squares

⁷⁴ The Underwoods suffered a tragedy in 1909 when their 7 month old daughter, Violet Ethel, was found dead in her bed of apparent diphtheria

It was always a custom for people to go to the shellfish stalls and have a plate or two of cockles, mussels or whelks. Sometimes during the evening or after the pubs were closed, many would have oysters. During the day, shellfish was bought by some locals for their tea.

Wednesdays and Saturdays were the full market days. It was a wonderful experience to watch the stall holders unloading their own horse and carts. There was every kind of fruit and vegetable, all of which was garden produce, including the beautiful plants and flowers. Most of these were grown in their own gardens, green houses, allotments, fields, farms and villages around Great Yarmouth. Poultry farmers also brought eggs and poultry from their own farms and everything was fresh.

When all the stalls were prepared and set up, they looked a picture, and everyone prayed for a fine day. Most of the stalls had very little cover against the weather, although some had a canvas top and a canvas back and some had a kind of sentry box as a weather cover.

The stalls were set out very close to each other into three lanes, which were six rows of stall, some backing onto each other. All the stall holders had something in common and very nice things to say to the customers in the broadest of Norfolk Language.

In part of the market anything could have been bought; including second-hand clothes, boots, old furniture and old pictures. Anything was obtainable from Yarmouth Market, and it is often said to be one of the largest open markets in England.

Some, who had a pitch, would try to sell anything to anybody. They told the same old story in the best cockney manner. In the end they all did the same antics, saying, *'hurry up I am giving this stuff away.'* On the days when the market was closed, all the stalls were taken into storage.

Cattle Market

Cattle were driven by drovers and their dogs, from the cattle market⁷⁵, which was situated on Station Road, Southtown (or Cobholm). This sales market or auction took place every Wednesday and buyers came from all over the district, many were farmers or butchers.

The animals included pigs, sheep, cows and bullocks, which came from all parts of the country and would travel by railway cattle trucks. After the sales, some of the cattle would be transported by railway cattle trucks to their destination. Some would be driven by drovers and dogs to fields in the area, mostly at Acle New Road where there was very good feeding ground, and would be collected as required. Many of the animals had to be driven through the market place, which was always a very busy shopping centre, and they had to pass the Hospital Boys and Girls Schools⁷⁶. Sometimes, a bullock would break away from the pack and make towards the shops, but it would soon be back after a few commands to the dogs from the drover.

⁷⁵ Originally a Saturday livestock market on Priory Plain, the coming of the railway saw the market moved to a site near Southtown station and a Wednesday market held

⁷⁶ St Nicholas Priory Junior School since 1999, the original site was St Mary's Hospital built in 1278. A Grammar school was founded there in 1552 utilising several of the old hospital buildings. It remained until 1797 and was later re-established elsewhere in the town. The Hospital school opened in 1843 and was rebuilt in 1932. It closed in 1982. Also on the site over the years have been a School of Correction and a Workhouse

The cattle would be taken to the abattoir which was on an opening off Market Road, and killed by the butcher. When the school ended for the day I and some of my pals at school would hurry to watch a bullock being killed. After much preparation by the butchers it would be ready for the butchers shop.

Sometimes, we would go on an errand for a butcher or for one of his staff. Most of the times it would be for cigarettes, and they would reward us all, by giving us each a pig bladder. This we would blow up like a balloon, and then we would have a friendly fight between ourselves.

Some butchers had a private slaughter house in various parts of Yarmouth and Gorleston. Every slaughter house had to be kept absolutely clean in accordance with the laws and regulations. The inspectors would call at any building without giving previous notice.

A factory in the vicinity of the abattoir, which was named as Turnbridges, manufactured tallow and processed all kinds of fats, and were sometimes reported about due to a very offensive smell, especially during the summer. This was absolutely unavoidable.

School Days

On the days when there were no stalls on the market place, the senior boys from Hospital Schools would make a football pitch opposite the school, by placing coats for goal posts. We played before school in the morning, during dinner and after school. Nobody complained, we only played with a soft ball and we had plenty of rivalry.

Our school was a very strict school, and had its rules which all the boys had to adhere to, or else! We did not have a uniform, like our neighbours at the Priory School, but we had to be clean and tidy. A teacher lined all the senior boys up and examined them. Most of us had stiff white collars, which were kept clean, by using a soap and flannel, and he was very angry if he found one not very clean.

Once, all the boys were told the inspector was to visit the school. All of us had to be very smart and our boots had to be polished. When I was getting ready for school, I could not find any polish, so I asked my mother what I could clean my boots with. She told me to use the stove polish which I did, and got a very good shine.

I thought I would be the smartest boy in the school, but when the teacher examined us before the inspector arrived he saw my boots and said, "What have you got on your boots?" I told him I could not find any boot polish so I used stove polish to get a good shine. He said "Stand out and do not try to be funny with me, your boots show all the others up." So, he gave me the cane for being too clever.

Two senior schools were situated in the market place; Hospital Boys School, and Hospital Girls School. I attended the Boys school from 1919 and my four sisters also attended. Later, my brother started at the Boys school. I was very successful at school, as I passed through all the classes; standard four, five, six, seven and ex seven. I was always in the top four; several times I did come second in the exams. The same boy always came top of the class.

During the summer, most of the boys in my class would march once a week with a teacher, from the school to the North Denes Beach, between Hamilton and Salisbury Roads. We had a school beach hut, which was used as a dressing room. We would undress and put on a pair of trunks or a swimming costume. Then we would be taken away from our teacher and passed on to our swimming instructor, Mr Tomlins, who would first make us do some exercises, under his instructions. Then we would go into the sea and he would teach us individually how to swim.

After several weeks, we would have a test by Mr Tomlins and, if we could swim in the sea for 25 yards, we would receive a certificate of which we were all very proud. After the swimming pool was built on the Marine Parade⁷⁷, all the school had lessons in the pool, and we all thanked Mr Tomlins for teaching us how to swim.

⁷⁷ Opened by Councillor Brett in 1922

First Jobs

During my time at school, I had several jobs after school hours, and I was allowed to start school at 9.30 am instead of 9.00 am. I worked at Aldred⁷⁸ the jewellers at George Street. I cleaned the windows, the floors and the brass work, and I lit a fire every morning in premises at the rear of the shop. I got the sack because I could not light a fire quickly enough- we had no coal, only coke⁷⁹.



I soon found another job, after school hours, at a grocer's shop in Howards Street named Hubbards, which was next to Kelf's⁸⁰ furniture and clothing shop, the weekly payment shop. During the spare time, I had to weigh out half pounds and one pounds of sugar or flour, which was sold in the shop. Most goods had to be packed and weighed, before being sold.

Every Friday morning at twelve o'clock I had to hurry from school, to the shop where I was an errand boy. My barrow would be ready for me to deliver the weekly grocery to one house on Southtown Road and to a Hotel which was called the Tramway Hotel⁸¹, on Lowestoft Road, Gorleston-on-Sea. These were regular customers so I could not let them down. I had to run most of the way because if I was late back at school after dinner, I would be punished. I think the run to Gorleston and back kept me fit for football on Saturday mornings.

On Sunday mornings, I had a good paper round for Mrs. Headley⁸² in Howard Street. This was how I was able to buy a new pair of football boots from Harry Davis⁸³.

⁷⁸ See footnote 34

⁷⁹ Coke is treated coal and is preferred by some as it gives off less pollution. However it can be notoriously difficult to light

⁸⁰ At Howard Street South which in 1889 was in the occupation of Edward Brady, a baker recently bankrupted, but by 1904 Charles Kelf was seeking general servants and in 1908 an assistant for the drapery counter. Describing the business as house furnishers they could supply furniture, clothing, drapery and wireless sets among other things – all on tick. They opened further stores at Beccles and Lowestoft were still trading at Yarmouth in 1965

⁸¹ Built in 1875 on the site of the Horse and Groom, it promised "Visitors and families supplied at grocer's prices". It was rebuilt after being badly damaged in World War II and remains open to this day. One of its great claims to fame came in February 1905 when it served up a sea pie 3 feet high and 4½ feet long and weighing 240lbs. The pie took 9 hours to cook and was served to a considerable company though the report neglects to say why.

⁸² John Milner Headley ran a newsagent at 18 Howard Street from at least 1893. By 1908 his wife Alice was involved in the business

⁸³ See footnote 6

Entertainment

While I was quite young and of school age, I would go to the Regent⁸⁴ with some of my pals on Saturday afternoon during the winter to see silent films of Charlie Chaplin⁸⁵, Pearl White⁸⁶ or cowboy pictures. For three pennies we would sit in the best seats; at the back on the ground floor. During the whole time the picture was being shown, a piano was playing incidental music. They had a very good pianist.

When I was a bit older, I was allowed to go to the Regent in the evening. At the first house it would cost four pennies, and I was always early so I got a good seat, not too near the front, but near enough to the stage.

A picture came on first, and when it was finished the screen was rolled away, and the stage was on. Most times, there was full orchestra for the stage show and every week, a famous person would be on the stage. Sometimes, a well-known singer or comedian would be top of the bill. The audience was asked to join in the chorus, and they all had a good sing song.

One evening, I went to The Theatre Royal⁸⁷ to see a show that was called, What the Moon Saw⁸⁸. It finished with plenty of clapping. I shall always remember this show, as when we came out of the show, Arnolds⁸⁹, one of the largest shops in the town, was on fire and the fire engines were there with crowds of people watching. It was gutted and burnt down.

⁸⁴ The Regent Theatre opened 26 December 1914 for both theatre and cinema use. It was taken over by Associated British Cinema (ABC) in 1929 and closed in 1982. It was revived briefly as a bingo hall but now stands empty

⁸⁵ Charles Spencer Chaplin KBE, otherwise the Tramp. 1889-1977. One of the most popular and influential actors of the Golden Age

⁸⁶ Pearl Fay White (1889-1938), an American actress and star of the silent screen. Best remembered for the serial *The Perils of Pauline*. She sustained a spinal injury filming the series which led to her self-medicating with drugs and alcohol to ease the pain and contributing to her death from liver failure at the age of just 49

⁸⁷ The Theatre Royal stood on Theatre Plain and was built in 1778, rebuilt almost entirely in 1820 and closed in 1928 to allow the building of the Regal which started in 1929

⁸⁸ A collection of children's songs and dances inspired by the Hans Christian Andersen story of the same name

⁸⁹ Arnolds was a famous Great Yarmouth department store. On Monday the 3rd February 1919 a fire broke out in one of their workshops which left terrible destruction to the store and surrounding properties. No lives were lost but much damage was wrought. The shop survived and continued trading as Arnolds until it was taken over by Debenhams in 1972.

Ships, Storms and the Haven

Great Yarmouth had a lightship headquarters⁹⁰, which was known as Trinity House⁹¹, and was situated on the quay side near to the Trawl Wharf⁹². All lightships which required servicing or repairs were brought from sea to Trinity House Quayside. After service and expert examination, they were taken out to sea to their former position. The lightships had a change of crew every two or three weeks, so the men had regular home leave.

Some very large ships entered Great Yarmouth harbour. These had the assistance of the local tugs, to negotiate a bend of the river and take them to a place where the cargo would be discharged. Many of the larger ships had a cargo of timber from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, or Canada. Some were able to berth at the quayside of Palgrave Brown⁹³, or Jewson and Sons Ltd⁹⁴.

Sometimes, a schooner with four masts would arrive from as far away as Russia or Sweden. It was a wonderful sight to witness; a boat in full sail, making towards the harbour. The crew were up the masts, furling the sails and dropping the anchor, waiting outside the harbour's mouth for a tug to take it to its berth which was very often on South Quay side. Some of the crew were ladies and were as good as the men. All were taking part in the crews' duty, climbing up the mast and working in the ship's hold.

During the winter, Great Yarmouth would very often have a gale blowing off the sea. The town had no shield when the wind was blowing from the East, North East or South East. Sometimes, the beach would become flooded, owing to a very high tide or gale force wind and the sea would reach the sea wall. No one could enter any hotel on the Marine Parade by the front entrance. The Gem⁹⁵, Empire⁹⁶ and Aquarium⁹⁷, closed the front entrance for the winter and all the hotels used the side or rear entrance.

Sometimes, the lifeboat had to go to sea during a gale and it moved from the lifeboat shed, across the drive, and across the beach, to the sea⁹⁸. A horse and some of the public assisted in the operation.

⁹⁰ In 1725 Nicholas Boulton, agent for Trinity House had a place assigned to him near Ballast Quay to lay his buoys. In 1841 Trinity House at Great Yarmouth officially became a depot and stayed as such until its closure in 2003

⁹¹ The Corporation of Trinity House of Deptford Strond, known as Trinity House, was established in 1514 by Royal Charter. Its purposes today are the General Lighthouse authority for the UK; act as the Deep Sea Pilotage Authority; and as a charity dedicated to the safety, welfare and training of mariners.

⁹² Originally established on the Ballast Wharf. That was later moved and the quayside took on the name of Trinity Wharf. Yarmouth actually doesn't have a Trawl Wharf unless it was a very colloquial name. The fishing boats landed at the Fish Wharf just south of Trinity Wharf

⁹³ William Palgrave Brown Jnr., born 1827, was an auctioneer and ship-owner in Yarmouth in the 1860s. By the 1880s he had a timber yard in Southtown and was described as a timber merchant. Brown, a philanthropist and religious man (He was a Sunday School teacher at the North Mission or Ragged School) died 21st March 1904. The business expanded massively in the 20th century by the beginning of this century was in trouble and in 2008 its assets were bought by James Donaldson and sons

⁹⁴ George Jewson opened started the business in Earith in 1836 and soon expanded to Norwich. His son John relocated to Norwich where as well as running a successful business, the Jewson family became an integral part of Norwich Society. They remain as both today. A branch and timber yard was established in Yarmouth early on.

⁹⁵ A variety theatre on Marine Parade built in 1908. It was renamed the Windmill in 1948 and the building still exists although its use has changed much and it is currently (2019) and indoor crazy gold venue

⁹⁶ Opened on Marine Parade in 1911 it was the first Yarmouth theatre designed exclusively to show films. Other than a short spell as a bingo hall, it remained a cinema until 1996 when it reopened as Hollywood themed bars. It is currently closed and up for sale

⁹⁷ Near the Britannia Pier, the theatre opened in 1876 as an aquarium and skating rink. It was converted into a theatre in 1883. After spells as a nightclub it remains a multiplex cinema today

⁹⁸ The Great Yarmouth lifeboat used to be based near Standard Road on Marine parade. This station closed in 1919 and the boats were moved across the river to the Gorleston side

The lifeboat had a sail and the crew had to row in a gale, many rescues were made. The crew were a very brave set of men. It was not so very far off Caister that the lifeboat capsized with the loss of all the crew during a winter gale⁹⁹. This lifeboat was launched from Caister Beach with a crew from Caister. On some occasions, the Wellington¹⁰⁰ and Britannia Piers¹⁰¹ were damaged by the gale.

Quite a large number of anglers, would fish from the Jetty¹⁰², both piers and the beach. Each had his own lantern and they'd still fish during a gale, it was always said that the gales would bring the cod nearer to the shore. A number of the anglers were lucky and caught a big cod, with a rod and line. This made the anglers very happy, although some fished for a long time and did not get a bite, or perhaps lost a big one. Some lost their line.

Drifters which went to sea and were caught in a gale would hang on to their nets, ride out of the storm and return to port with the crew none the worse for the experience. I had a brother in law on the A Rose¹⁰³ who was caught in a gale for a week.

Different Storms

The traffic was stopped several times, being unable to pass along Marine Parade, because of sand drifts. This had to be cleared away by the corporation, who employed men for a few days from the labour exchange to carry on with this task.

When the heavy snow stopped all the traffic and the trams could not run through the town, it was very significant as this was the only means of transport for the people to get to and from work.

The town centre and King Street were always cleared by the unemployed, who were engaged by the corporation from the labour exchange. They were provided with a shovel and broom to load the snow and ice into a horse drawn tumbril and have it taken away and tipped into the river. All the trams were soon able to work again.

All the people who lived in a row, suffered most by the snow as it could not be taken away. Everyone cleared their doorway and had to wait for the thaw. It was very dangerous for the elderly to walk on snow or ice, so most were confined to their own house. The neighbours and children were very good and kind to the elderly, and offered help wherever they could. Some of the old people were very independent. Most of the people in the rows were not able to stock up for the winter as they were not rich. The Salvation Army provided a soup kitchen sometimes during the winter.

⁹⁹ This would be the loss of the Caister Lifeboat crew on 13th November 1901 when their boat overturned during a rescue in the Great Storm. At the inquest the coroner asked why they had not abandoned the rescue given the conditions. Retired coxswain James Haylett gave an explanation that has become paraphrased and immortalised as Caister men Never Turn back

¹⁰⁰ Wellington Pier was built in 1854. It is still in place today though somewhat altered over the years

¹⁰¹ Britannia Pier opened in 1858. Despite several fires it still stands today but changes to the coastline mean it is totally over dry land except during exceptionally high tides and storm surges

¹⁰² The Jetty was a simple pier to allow the unloading of boats and ships that jutted out between the two piers. Originally built around xxxx it was rebuilt in 1701 and damaged by storms in 1767, 1791 and 1805. In 1809 it was rebuilt again and lengthened in 1846 and again in 1870. Despite public protest it was demolished in January 2012.

¹⁰³ A steam-drifter with the registration number YH69, at 122 feet long was at one time the longest boat in the Yarmouth fleet. Built in Selby in 1924 she was sold to Norway in 1946. Today she is in the hands of a collector who intends to preserve her

North Quay and the Railway

Cattle were often driven by drovers and dogs along North Quay, over Fullers Hill to the abattoir off Market Road.

The animals which were appearing in the circus at the Hippodrome¹⁰⁴ arrived by train, and with all the publicity, would be taken through the town to the stables at the Hippodrome.

At the South End of the North Quay, was Hall Quay, which was the part of the quay where pleasure boats were based. Every day during the summer season, hundreds of visitors boarded the boats for a trip around the broads. These trips were very popular. The boats were known as the Lily Boats¹⁰⁵ and were driven by the steam engines, and had a driver and fireman, skipper and several deck hands and attendants. All the boats had an open top deck, and a saloon bar below, and also plenty of music.

The Conge was very convenient for the people arriving at Vauxhall Station¹⁰⁶. It was the nearest way to the market place and beach. On Bank Holidays and during the summer, extra trains were on from Norwich and the villages in the area.

North Quay had a beautiful church, named St Andrews¹⁰⁷. At the extreme end of North Quay, were the River Bure and suspension bridge and also the yacht station, where yachts came across Breydon from Lowestoft, Oulton Road, Norwich or Reedham. There was a row from North Quay to The Feathers Hotel¹⁰⁸ on Northgate Street. At the end of North Quay was the very old Watch Tower. At the part of the North Quay near this tower was a railway siding for traffic from the Beach¹⁰⁹ station; M&GN Railway¹¹⁰, and also from Midland and North Eastern Railway¹¹¹.

¹⁰⁴ Built in 1903 by George Gilbert it is the last purpose built circus building still being used as a circus. One of only four in the world with a built-in water feature – there is a pool under the ring – the Hippodrome has been run by the Jay family since 1981

¹⁰⁵ Named for the Lily, the first of the pleasure boats run by the Yarmouth Pioneer Steamboat company beginning around the turn of the 20th century. In 1903 the Lily was put on a short run between Yarmouth and Burgh Castle whilst the Resolute came in as her replacement. Later famous names such as the Golden Galleon would carry the passengers on their trips up the Broads whilst boats like the Norwich Belle and Eastern Princess took them out to sea

¹⁰⁶ Opened in 1844 for the Yarmouth and Norwich Railway, Vauxhall Station passed through the hands of the Norfolk Railway, Eastern Counties Railways, Great Eastern Railway, and London and North Eastern Railway before being nationalised in 1948. It survived Beeching and various economic slumps and is Yarmouth's last remaining railway station

¹⁰⁷ See footnote 18

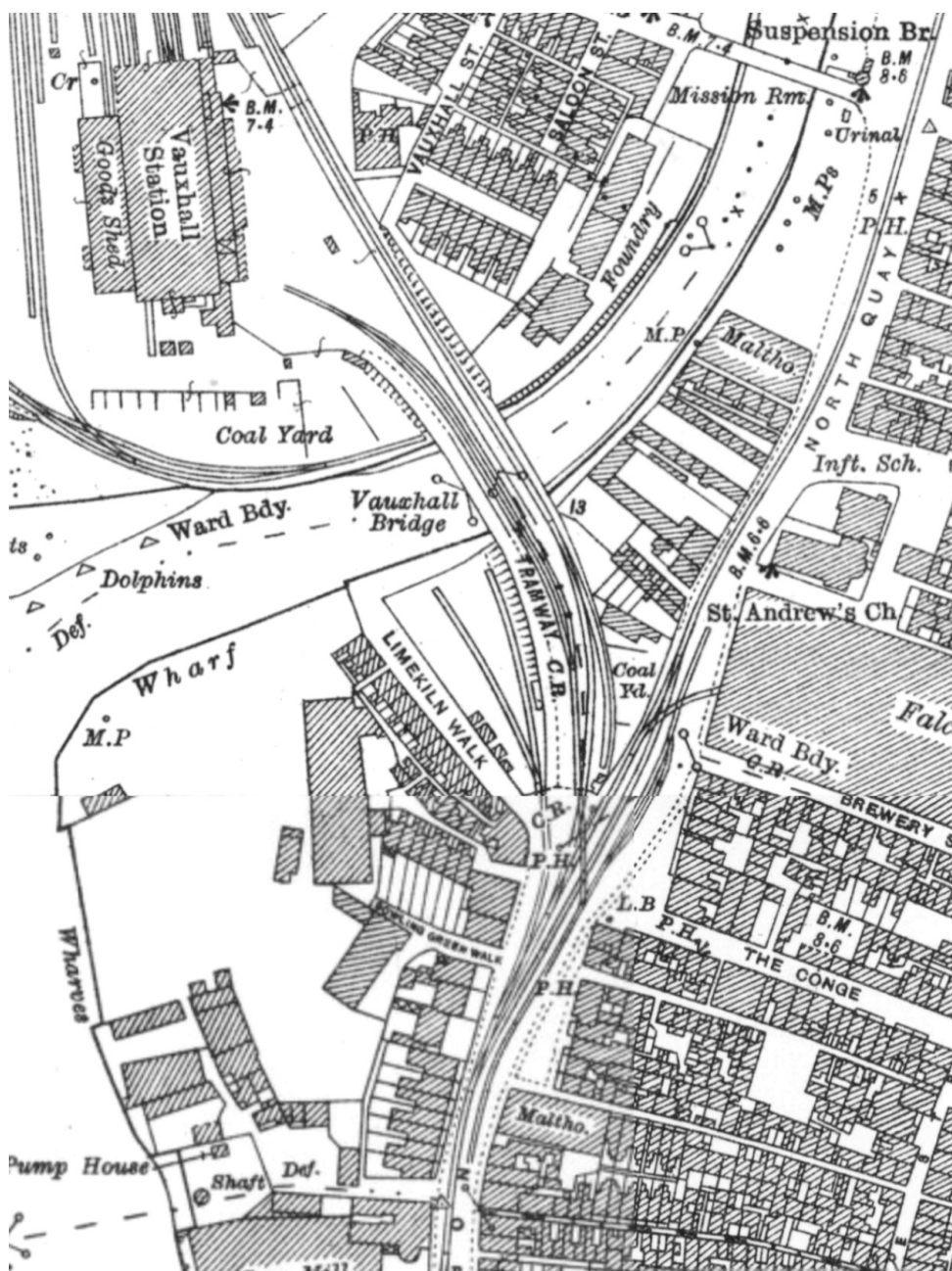
¹⁰⁸ The Feathers Hotel was in Market Gates. The only pub at the end of a row from North Quay to Northgate Street is the East And West Flegg, which would make this Row 2 or East And West Flegg Row (formerly Black Horse Row and Bird In Hand Row)

¹⁰⁹ Opened in 1877 by the Great Yarmouth and Stalham Light Railway, Beach station it was taken over by the Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway in 1893. The line headed out through Caister, Ormesby & Hemsby before heading inland to Stalham, Melton Constable and then on to the Midlands making it a great holidaymaker train. It closed in 1959 becoming a coach station that utilised the platforms and waiting rooms but was demolished in the early eighties. It is now a coach and car park

¹¹⁰ The Midland and Great Northern railway, colloquially known as the Muddle and Go Nowhere, was incorporated in 1893 from several other railway companies. Its network was the longest of all the Joint railways in the country but most of it was closed and ripped up in or soon after 1959. A piece between Holt and Sheringham continues as a heritage railway, whilst a section from Cromer to Sheringham is run by Network rail

¹¹¹ I believe the Midland and North Eastern Railway only operated in Yorkshire so I think George is referring to the Eastern and Midlands Railway that was taken over by the M&GN, or the London and North Eastern Railway which took over Vauxhall station from the Great Eastern Railway in 1923

Sometimes a train would have trucks or box wagons for the North Quay area and the engine would shut these, as required, into private premises, such as Lacon's¹¹² brewery or Wenn's¹¹³ box factory. Both these works had a line into them from the main line.



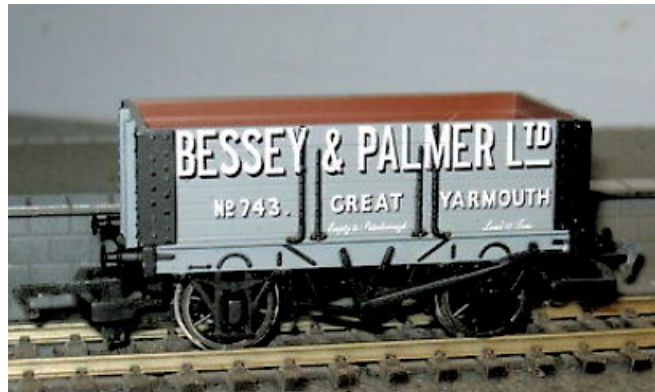
During the day, an engine would pass across the main road into Lacon's brewery and collect all the box wagons or trucks to take to Vauxhall goods yard, where they would be sorted and delivered to various parts of the country. The same procedure would happen at Wenn's.

Some of the work or coal yards were next to houses, and wagons were left outside the works or coal yards to be unloaded, which sometimes took several hours. This was very dangerous for the children who lived nearby and was a very big worry for parents.

¹¹² See footnote 14

¹¹³ Frederick Wenn was born in Downham Market and began his working life at sea before settling in Kings Lynn and working on the docks. Wenn married and moved to Yarmouth and in the 1890s acquired a timber mill on the South Quay to manufacture boxes for the fishing industry. Just before the First World War they moved to North Quay. Wenn died in 1932 and the business continued in the hands of his nephew Reginald Porter. As the fishing industry declined the Wenn site was sold to Jewson and sons in 1955/6 though R.H. Porter Ltd continued manufacturing boxes on Cobholm until 1969.

The works near the railway lines were Steward and Patteson's¹¹⁴ bottle department, a public house, a granary, Garson and Blake¹¹⁵ builders merchants, Jackson and Carr¹¹⁶ wholesale grocers, a restaurant, a row of houses and Bessey and Palmer's¹¹⁷ coal yard.



There was a regular goods service from Great Eastern Railway¹¹⁸ goods yard at Vauxhall Station, which consisted of several railway engines, all of which had a crew of; an engine driver, fireman, shunter and two flag boys. About two or three engines would be working at various parts of the track. The first shunt would be to a goods yard on the corner of a surround near some houses at the bottom of Vauxhall Bridge¹¹⁹.

This yard was always very busy as most of the local merchants loaded their lorries from the wagons, with one hundredweight sacks of coal, which were weighed from the truck. The engines were especially built for this class of work. It had a cow-catcher at each end of the engine, which was coal fired and could pull a train of about 20-30 wagons loaded. The trucks were shunted into various sidings, which were close to the river bank. Then, they were unloaded by men carrying baskets filled with coal and tipping the coal into the ships' coal bunkers.

Most of the ships were trawlers and drifters and it was very busy during the season. Also, pleasure boats, tugs and various other ships were coaled up at the same time. Most ships were steam ships in those days. Sometimes, the train would travel as far as Gorleston ferry on the Yarmouth side. This was near to the last siding. On the return journey, the engine would bring back several empty wagons, and also box trucks or wagons which were loaded from a ship, discharging its cargo at the quayside.

¹¹⁴ See footnote 61

¹¹⁵ Actually Garson Blake and son builder's merchants. Garson Blake (1814-1878) was a ship-owner and coal merchant who started the builder's merchant about 1860 with his son Lovewell, who later started the accountancy that bears his name to this day. Garson Blake and sons went bankrupt in 1990

¹¹⁶ Jackson and Carr were on North Quay by Fisher's Quay from at least 1886 until at least 1974. They also had a shop on Market Gate for some time. Part of their North Quay warehouse is now used by Lamarti ice Creams to store the vans. The business was taken over Gertrude Banham and Howard and Arnold Mason in the early 20th century

¹¹⁷ William Henry De Montmorency Bessey (1842-1916) was originally in the coal merchant business with John Bessey Hylton. Both were also ship owners. Hylton died suddenly at the age of 44 in February 1866. By 1874 Bessey was established as 12 South Quay in business with his son (Also William Henry) and as Bessey and Palmer on the quay with William Hurry Palmer. They were ship-brokers, and commission agents too but best remembered as coal merchants with depots at Yarmouth, Runham (Vauxhall station), Gorleston and Lowestoft. They had rail trucks emblazoned with their name that were so well-known Hornby released them as OO scale models

¹¹⁸ Founded in 1862 on the amalgamation of Eastern Counties Railways with several smaller companies, the GER ran the mainline between London and Norwich and onwards to other towns such as Hunstanton, Cromer, Lowestoft and Yarmouth. It disappeared with nationalisation in 1948

¹¹⁹ The metal bridge across the Bure built for the railway originally opened in 1852. It was rebuilt using much of the original structure in 1887. As well as the railway it carried trams, pedestrians and from 1931, cars and lorries as the other Bure bridge had been declared not fit for purpose. With new bridges for road traffic and the demise of the railways, the bridge fell in disuse and decay. A restoration project began in early in the 21st century allowing the bridge to be opened to cyclist and pedestrians whilst further restoration work continued

Sometimes, race horses would travel by railway, and would arrive in special horse boxes at Southtown¹²⁰, Vauxhall or Beach station, and would walk, being lead in a string of horses, to the stables which were on South Denes.

The racecourse was moved to the North Denes¹²¹, very close to Caister Golf Course and not very far away from the beach. The same procedure took place, with quite a number of racehorses walking in strings, from the station through Newtown via Northgate Street to the stables at the racecourse.

It was always arranged for the horses to arrive a day or two before the race in which the horse was running. When the horses were being lead through Northgate Street, they attracted many of the local people. Sometimes, a horse would become a bit restive and start to play up, but the lad who was leading the horse kept speaking to it and always had the horse under control.

The race meetings were held twice a year on Wednesday and Thursday, during spring, known as the Spring Meeting, and a Wednesday or Thursday during September. At the meeting, most of the works in Great Yarmouth would give all the staff half a day holiday pay, to be able to go to the races which were from 2pm-4.30pm.

I was very fortunate, as I did not live far from the racecourse and stables, in no. 3 Pleasant Place, Northgate Street. So, I was able to get my bike out and go to the racecourse before going to work, early in the morning to watch the horses having a work out. I was sometimes given a tip which sometimes won, other times lost but it was very exciting. I saw a horse working and it was tubed¹²² and trained by Wootton¹²³. It could be heard a mile away.

[Text missing here] George became a flag boy for a while

All the flag boys¹²⁴ were sixteen years of age or over, and their duty was to keep a certain distance from the engine. They had to carry a red flag to warn traffic and pedestrians of an approaching engine. The red flag was attached to an iron bar, with a bevelled end, which was used for changing the points when required.

Most of the young men worked long enough to qualify as an engine cleaner and eventually as a fireman, but the goal was to become an engine driver. It was a very tiresome job as it was eight hour shifts with two flag boys who, most of the time, had to run in front of the engine.

When I reached the age for promotion, the manager at the time, Mr Dutton, told me it would be a long time before I could become an engine cleaner as at the present time he had no vacancies. At the time, I was playing football for the G.E.R so I gave my notice and found employment with a very well-known timber importer and sawmills "Jewson and Sons Limited." This firm had a good football team.

¹²⁰ The third of Yarmouth's railway stations, South Town (which is how the railways always spelt it) opened in 1859 as terminus for the east Suffolk line to Ipswich via Beccles. The station closed in 1970 and became the UK HQ of an American Oil company (Santa Fe Ltd). It was demolished in the eighties to accommodate Pasteur Road

¹²¹ It moved in 1920 as the fishing industry need more ground on the South Denes

¹²² The practice of putting a tube in a horse's neck (almost a tracheostomy) to help it breathe more efficiently during races. The practice was outlawed but only in 2012

¹²³ Presumably Stanley Thomas Wootton (1895-1986), the jockey turned Epsom trainer

¹²⁴ These 'boys' walked with the trains as they moved around the North Quay area. It's important to realise that the tracks ran alongside the road, across the road, and IN the road.

Employment

I was employed at Jewson and Sons Limited¹²⁵ as a youth and my wage when I started was seventeen shillings and six pence per week, but I did make it up to one pound by working overtime. The normal working week was seven in the morning until six at night, with half an hour for breakfast and one hour dinner.

I was very good at figures so I soon got a promotion to a checker and then to a foreman. We had several planing machines and these made quite a lot of 'chippens' or shavings. The shavings would be baled up and taken to a machine and made into wood-wool which was used in industry for packing. The shavings were sold, but the chippens were given to various fish-curers, for smoking kippers and I and the men always had kippers for breakfast. They were cooked on a shovel at Clarke's¹²⁶ flour mill's boiler house.



Figure 9 Clarke's flour mill on Southtown Road

Workhouse

Great Yarmouth had a workhouse¹²⁷ which was situated on Northgate Street and every night would be full of people who were known as tramps. Some had a work task before they could leave, but most of the people could leave next morning and make their way to various part of the area. Many would sleep rough and many would call at the houses and ask for hot water to make tea with. Some would find an open space and collect pieces, so they could boil their water by making a fire. A small saucepan in which they boiled water was sometimes carried around their neck. After a rest and a cup of tea, they would carry on walking, looking for work, but seldom found it. What a life.

¹²⁵ See footnote 94

¹²⁶ R. H. Clarke's Waveney Mill flour mill on Southtown Quayside. Started by Robert Harvey Clarke in 1878, it was rebuilt after the 1928 fire (See footnote 15). It was by Hovis in 1945 and absorbed into RHM (Rank Hovis McDougall) who in turn sold it Pasta Foods in 2003 who are based just beyond on Pasteur Road. The rebuilt mill is still there

¹²⁷ From 1654 until 1838 Great Yarmouth Workhouse was in the St Mary's Hospital site. After the foundation of the Yarmouth Poor Law Union in 1837 a new workhouse was built in Northgate Street. In the twentieth century it became the Northgate hospital but since the opening of the James Paget has increasingly been used for clinics and specialist services only.

Railway Stations

Great Yarmouth had three railway stations: Vauxhall station, Beach station and Southtown station. The railways stations were open day and night including Sunday and trains would arrive from all parts of the country.

Several hundreds of passengers would arrive during the holiday period, from Norwich and Districts, and thousands of holidaymakers from London and all over England would flock to Great Yarmouth. This was a very popular holiday resort; with one of the best beaches, beautiful golden sands, and a very flat Marine Parade. Visitors passed the time sun bathing, watching tennis or bowls and bathing from beach huts. These had very large wheels and were put into position as near to the sea as possible every morning, and taken back nearer to the sea wall every evening by horses.



Figure 10 Yarmouth Beach Station

The Fishing Industry

Great Yarmouth was a very important fishing port, as several trawlers fished out of the port and, when leaving, most would make their way to the Dogger Bank, which was a very good fishing ground. Most of the fish they caught were cod, plaice, whiting, skate, haddock, lemon soles, hake, garnet and weavers.

After about ten or fourteen days, the trawler would return to port and land their catch on the new trawl market¹²⁸, which was next to the Trinity House. This part was reserved for trawlers. When the fish was landed it would be put into a fish box which had an open top, and the buyers could inspect the fish for the quality and the type, while the fish were being sold by auction.

After about two days, the trawlers would be replenished with food and water, perhaps changing the nets or trawl and everything would be serviced including the engine. The crew would get everything ship shape. While the bunkers were filled with coal, most trawlers had steam engines with a driver and fireman. Even if the last trip was a very rough one, the crew were always ready for the next trip, no one ever complained.

There were plenty of good fish shops in Great Yarmouth. Some were noted for their smoked haddock and skate which were very popular. The difference between a haddock and a whiting is by the thumb print on the haddock, which is said 'God blessed'.

Most of the fried-fish shops sold every kind of fish, and the inhabitants of the town nearly lived on fish as it was always fresh. Hawkers sold fish from a barrow, it was very convenient for most people.

[pages 46 and 47 missing here]

The Fisher Girls

Most of the Scots girls would stay at the same house year after year and were all classed as part of the family. Exmouth Road, Ordnance Road, Admiralty Road and Queens Road were full of Scots girls during the herring season¹²⁹. The girls were very nice pleasant girls.

They were brawny Scots, most had a full red face and a very pleasant smile. I found only one fault; when they started talking, I did not know what they were talking about as they all spoke with their Scottish brogue.

I have never seen such a large number of girls knitting. Everyone had to have two or three jumpers and oilskins when the weather was really bad, so knitted garments were really appreciated. No one could go out during the evening with the same clothing on, as herring was not a pleasant smell.

¹²⁸ Prior to 1867 Yarmouth fishermen landed their catches on the beach or Jetty. Someone was unloaded on the South Quay but this was not very popular. In 1967 a fish wharf opened just south of Trinity Quay which was custom built. At first it wasn't very popular but eventually served by trains and trams it soon took off and had to be expanded

¹²⁹ October to December

I was absolutely surprised when I saw the beautiful Fair Isles¹³⁰ the girls were knitting, but they paid no attention to anyone, they were talking, laughing and telling good jokes to each other. Saturday evenings, most of the Scots girls would congregate in King Street with their Scots boyfriends and all the street was Scotch for the weekend.

[pages 49 and 50 missing here]



Figure 11 Scottish Fisher girl gutting the herring

¹³⁰ Jumpers knitted using a traditional technique named after Fair Isle, one of the Shetland Islands. Fair Isle knitting gained considerable popularity when the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) wore Fair Isle jumpers in public in 1921

The First World War

When I was seven years of age, a most terrible thing happened. War broke out between England and Germany¹³¹. On the same evening, every street light had to be extinguished, and house or building of any kind must not have had a light showing outside.

Nearly all the street lights were gas lights. Before the war, every gas lamp in the rows and the streets were lit before dark and also put out by gas employees, very early in the morning at sunrise. Every row had one or two gas lights but these were cut off for the duration of the war. Every house or building had gas or paraffin light or perhaps candles. Very few had electricity.

People who were walking about outside after dark were asked to wear a button on their coat and the button was luminous so could be seen in the dark about two yards away. This would help people not to walk into each other.

When war broke out, every male person of eighteen or over was called up for military service. They had to be passed as fit when examined by the doctor.

My father was called up and he joined The Royal Flying Corps¹³². I remember standing at the King Street end of Row 116¹³³ with a large crowd of people who were waiting for the men to march by.

They were marching from the Drill Hall¹³⁴ which was on York Road. As they marched past, the crowd began to cheer and wave. Most of the people were looking for their husband, father, son, sweetheart, friend or neighbour. My mother was looking for her husband and I and my sisters were looking for our father.

All the men appeared to be quite happy when they passed by. They were whistling the tune which the band was playing as they marched to Vauxhall or Southtown Station.

They were all dressed in civilian clothes and when they arrived at the station, a train was waiting to take them to their barracks where they would be fitted out with a uniform and rifle for training to become a soldier or sailor.

Many of the men did not come back; they were killed on active service.

In the crowd who were watching the men marching past, many were saying, "The war cannot last very long," and "Then men will soon be back home." How wrong they were as the war lasted five years; 1914-1919.

I shall always remember this sad episode for as long as I live. Everyone had their loved ones taken away.

All our lives were completely changed. My mother and her children were left without the one we all loved and we all hoped he would soon be back home with us. He was the one I had

¹³¹ 28th July 1914

¹³² The air-arm of the British army from 13 April 1912–1 April 1918 when it merged with the Royal naval Air Service to form the Royal Air Force

¹³³ Sam Hurry's Row but also Hastings The Pawnbroker's Row

¹³⁴ Built in 1867 for the 2nd Volunteer Battalion Norfolk Regiment. In the mid-20th century it was replaced by a new Drill Hall on the Southtown Road and went to the Borough Council. It was later sold to the charity Furnishaid

hoped to follow. From that day, my mother had to bring up her family on her own, five daughters and two sons.

She was a wonderful mother, and sometimes she was very depressed while she had no husband with her. She was very kind to all her children, and we all loved her. She was quite young when she had to manage on her own. Only sometimes did I have to put my sisters in order and let them know who was in charge. We were all one big happy family, and managed to get through the war OK, but without our father.

During the war everything was on ration, including food and everything was very scarce. Queues were formed everywhere.

The Salvation Army¹³⁵ used their hall which was in Middlegate Street¹³⁶ as a soup kitchen for people who lived in the district. Some people received no assistance, some were very poor, some very old, some without husbands, some without fathers, some without brothers or sons. I was sent sometimes to the soup kitchen for the people who lived in the row, with a very large jug for soup which several could share and was a God send.

The town was full of troops and most ancient buildings were taken over. Most hotels and boarding houses on the front were taken over and used for billets for the troops. One large hotel on St Nicholas Road was taken over by the Army. Its name was The Garibaldi¹³⁷, and normally at this time of year it would have been full with private business gentlemen. Many empty shops were taken over and used as supply depots.

Every morning, horses and carriages of Royal Artillery, would be loaded with hundreds of loaves of bread, to be distributed at the troop's billets. These horses and carriages could be heard quite a distance away. The carriages had iron rims on the wheels. Most had two horses and one rider, who were always mounted on the outside horse.

At this time of year, Great Yarmouth would have been packed with holiday makers as it was a very popular resort. Thousands of holiday makers were kept away and it was a very bad time for the people of the town, as most of the ordinary houses were normally booked as apartments for visitors. Some visitors from Manchester had booked to stay at an ordinary dwelling house, where they had stayed for the last eight years, but had to cancel the booking this year.

We had a very hard time during the Great War 1914-1919. The town was full of troops. Things were not so good for the local people, owing to the government rules and regulations, and also military rules.

Great Yarmouth was no longer a holiday resort. It had become a military town. All of the beach, North and South Denes and various parts of the town were out of bounds to the public. Trenches were dug on the beach, beach gardens and North and South Denes. Parts of the beach were mined.

¹³⁵ Christian charitable organisation founded in 1865 by William Booth

¹³⁶ The Army only opened their Citadel in Middlegate Street in January 1924 in a building built for the Friendly Society. It had lately been used by Johnson and Sons. After a previous Barracks was destroyed by fire 1883 they used the Drill Hall but had obtained Barracks in Regent Street and South Market Road by 1909. However they did use the Middlegate Street Congregational Church and I must presume it was here that they ran the soup kitchen

¹³⁷ Originally a pub, by 1889 it was a boarding house offering holiday accommodation to men only – up to 400 at a time. The guests were known as Garibaldi Lambs and devoted much of their holidays to charitable works. It was rebuilt by Lacons in 1957 and became a nightclub finally being demolished in 2006

Some of the works were closed and most of them which were open were on government requirements. All the schools were kept open, for most of the duration of the war. Most of the children, who would have spent five weeks holiday from school on the beach, could not go anywhere near because the beach had barbed wire fences, trenches and it was guarded by troops. Most of the local people were afraid of air-raids and the children always played very near to their homes. The usual five weeks on the beach was off.

The Naval Hospital¹³⁸, and the Royal Garrison Artillery Barracks¹³⁹, situated at the South End of the town, were utilised to capacity. All of the South Denes was taken over, and used as an aerodrome¹⁴⁰ and was made out of bounds to the general public.

Several stables were taken over by the army in various parts of town. Some stables were situated near to the Drill Hall and every day after school, some of my pals and I would go to the stables to watch the soldiers attending to the horses. Sometimes, they were washing and grooming them and making new straw beds for them. All the time the soldiers were working, they were talking to the horses as if they were children. Every horse had a name, given to them by their rider, and when their name was mentioned they seemed to know it and responded by standing perfectly still with its ears pricked up.

The soldier would give the horse a pat on the neck and sometimes gave it a titbit of a carrot or a biscuit. Some of the soldiers got quite friendly with us boys and did not mind us watching them look after the horses. Sometimes, we would be given a sandwich or a few biscuits. The biscuits were very hard and they were rationed for emergency rations.

We were often asked to fetch some cigarettes from the shop in King Street every time we were ready to go home. All the soldiers were quite young and very nice men who came from all parts of the country. Sometimes they gave us a cigarette.

Wellington Pier, Britannia Pier and the Jetty were closed and guarded day and night. The town was well guarded from the sea by patrol ships and several other navy ships. Although Yarmouth was well guarded, it was rumoured German spies were living in the town but none were caught.

During September 1916, I was awakened by a crowd of people shouting in the row. They were all very excited. I dressed very quickly, called my mother, brother and sisters up. When a neighbour came running down the row shouting very loud, "everyone take cover, the Germans are here, and are bombarding the town." We could all hear the shelling, but could do nothing about it; everyone kept where they were and were very calm as we had nowhere to go. So, we all kept together in the row, it was a very frightening time¹⁴¹.

We were very fortunate at Great Yarmouth as the German warships were shelling between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft and did not get the correct range, and although some shells did land in the town, most of them missed and landed on the Breydon or on fields nearby.

¹³⁸ Started in 1809 it was finished by 1811 but only received its first patients in 1815 after the Battle of Waterloo. Its lack of use led to it being converted to barracks between 1818 and 1844 when it became a 'lunatic asylum'. Its use switched several times until it was bought by the NH Sin 1958 to use as a psychiatric hospital. It closed and was converted to residential flats in 1993.

¹³⁹ Built in 1854 as the New Militia Barracks, it was sold to the regular army in 1873 and became the Royal Garrison Artillery Barrack. It was demolished to make way for the Barrack Estate which opened in 1924.

¹⁴⁰ In April 1913 a Royal Naval Air Service land and seaplane base opened on the South Denes. It later became RAF Great Yarmouth closing in November 1920

¹⁴¹ The Battle of Lowestoft, where both Yarmouth and Lowestoft were shelled by German battleships, actually took place in April 1916. Although there were five attacks on Yarmouth in total (2 by Zeppelin and 3 by ships) none were in September 1916 so George may have got his date wrong here

Some hotels on the marine parade did get hit by shrapnel and were damaged but no one was killed.

The scars left by the shelling on the hotels on Marine Parade, including the Holkham¹⁴², were there for years. This was the only time Yarmouth was bombarded during the Great War¹⁴³.

When war was declared, Great Yarmouth ceased to be a trading port, most of the ships had left Great Yarmouth before the war was declared. Only a few ships which were escorted in convoy by the navy entered the port. All the fishing industry stopped, and all the drifter and trawlers were laid up or commandeered by the government. Some trawlers became minesweepers but with sailors for the crew. The mouth of the harbour became protected by a boom and every movement of any ship was under control.

The port became a base for the Royal Navy and many types of Naval ships entered the harbour including, H.M.S Alecto¹⁴⁴ which was a supply and communications ship for submarines. Many were based at Great Yarmouth for the duration of the war. Destroyers and various types of Navy ships often entered the harbour with the crew lining the deck up forward and all standing to attention. Part of the area near to the harbour's mouth was guarded by Royal Garrison Artillery.

A very large part of the riverside was turned into a compound, surrounded with barbed wire fencing, and several small buildings as offices for H.M.S Alecto and submarines. Several of the H and K class were moored inside the compound under very heavy guard. After a trip at sea in a submarine, the sailors were always ready for shore leave. As soon as they moored in the compound, the sailors became very popular with the local people, pubs and girls.

One very popular hotel was situated in King Street and was named The White Lion Hotel¹⁴⁵. When the sailors had shore leave they would visit the hotel and mix with the local people. They were very popular with them and were very good customers.

When the landlord knew he would have some sailors amongst his customers, he would engage a very good pianist as the sailors were very popular with the local girls and liked a good sing song and also spent plenty of money on them.

I had an aunt who was a barmaid and she lived in a hotel with the rest of the staff. She found a sweetheart, who was a Scotsman on board a submarine of the K Class and he was a leading seaman. He was a very good customer when he came ashore. He was a member of the crew of a submarine which was moored in the compound and was only allowed to leave the compound when he had a shore leave pass.

My aunt gave me a letter for her sailor sweetheart and told me he would be waiting for me and looking out of the compound. This happened many times. I knew where to find him and he would give me a letter for my aunt. But first he had to get permission from the officer on guard for him to pass a letter to me outside the compound. I must have been a good successful messenger as they were happily married and had a family when the war was over, living at Reedham and became tenant of a good hotel.

¹⁴² At 35 Marine Parade, built in 1874 to replace a previous building closer to the sea, it closed in 1996 and is now an amusement arcade

¹⁴³ As mentioned above there were actually five attacks. Zeppelins in January 1915 and August 1918; warships in November 1914, April 1916 and January 1918

¹⁴⁴ A depot ship launched in 1911 and sold in 1949

¹⁴⁵ Originally a house and now believed to be the oldest surviving residence in Yarmouth, it became a pub in 1740. It only closed in 2017

During the Great War, Great Yarmouth became a very important defensive area, with aerodromes situated on the South Denes for all kind of planes. Some sea planes were made by Shorts¹⁴⁶, which could be converted into a fighter plane which could land on the sea or on land by changing its floats. This was sometimes very convenient. Several types were housed here, including Sopwith Biplanes¹⁴⁷, Bleriot Monoplanes¹⁴⁸, and Henri Farman¹⁴⁹ biplanes. These were all fighter planes or reconnoitre planes.



Figure 12 Sailors position a plane on the base on the South Denes

The biggest problem The Royal Flying Corps had, was to guard against the Zeppelins¹⁵⁰ which would appear from all directions with cloud cover and very often dropped some bombs. Most of the Zeppelins came from German territory, and over cloud cover, made for Happisburgh, which had a lighthouse which was used as a sign post for them. The Zeppelins would then take the different directions sometimes north, inland or south.

Some bombs were dropped at Bacton, Sheringham, Snettisham, Cromer, Kings Lynn and Great Yarmouth. On one of these trips, five people were killed and about twenty injured.

Sometimes, they would pass over Sandringham and people were saying they had missed their target! All kinds of stories were told by the locals, such as German spies were living in the area and could pass different codes to the Zeppelins. All the Zeppelins carried some kind of bomb.

¹⁴⁶ The Short brothers Eustace and Oswald started manufacturing hot-air balloons in 1887. They progressed to aircraft in 1908 and based themselves in Kent.

¹⁴⁷ The Sopwith Aviation Company was created in June 1912 by Thomas Octave Murdoch Sopwith. Its most famous plane was the Sopwith Camel.

¹⁴⁸ Blériot Aéronautique were a French aircraft manufacturer started in 1905 by Louis Blériot, famed as the first man to fly the English Channel. During World War One they mostly manufactured planes for other companies. The only specifically designed Blériot bombers never entered service.

¹⁴⁹ Farman was a sports pilot but in 1909 he fell out with his aircraft supplier Voisin and began manufacturing his own aircraft. In partnership with his brothers Dick and Maurice, Farman Aircraft were highly successful making the first long-distance passenger aircraft, Goliath.

¹⁵⁰ The rigid airships used with great effect by the Germans. They delivered the first ever aerial bombardment of the UK when they bombed Sheringham, Kings Lynn and Great Yarmouth in January 1915.

Some were fire bombs, several fights took place near Happisburgh, some were shot down and some escaped.

During January 1915, a Zeppelin raided Great Yarmouth and dropped some bombs but no one was killed¹⁵¹. One bomb dropped on a playing field and some gardens, no one was hurt. Seven bombs¹⁵² and seven incendiary were dropped.

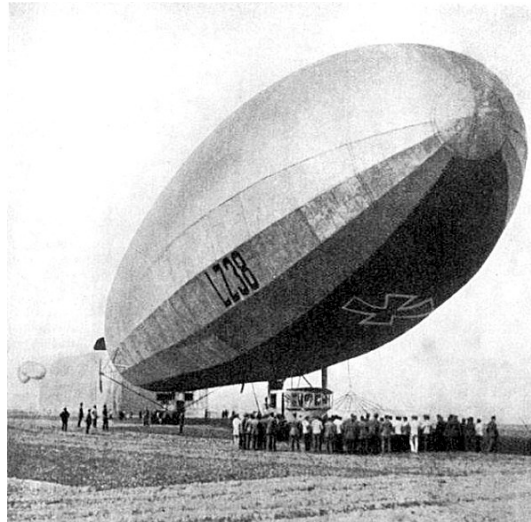


Figure 13 A typical German Zeppelin of the time

Fights very often took place between Zeppelins and the fighter planes which were stationed in the Aerodrome on South Denes. On several occasions, the Zeppelin caught fire and all the crew were lost in the North Sea.

Sometimes the Zeppelin had a crew of six, eight, twelve or sixteen. The raids on the east coast by Zeppelins became less as they did not get enough cloud cover and were easily spotted by the fighters.

I remember when a pilot who was stationed at Great Yarmouth destroyed a Zeppelin between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft over the North Sea and all the crew were lost. His name was Flight Lieutenant Cadbury¹⁵³, who was decorated for intercepting a Zeppelin which was reported to be flying around Norwich. Later one of the most successful planes to out manoeuvre the Zeppelin was the H-12 flying boat¹⁵⁴ which was stationed at the South Denes.

The local people were afraid to go out after dark and were scared of the Zeppelins and they were always talking about the Zeppelins, wondering what would happen if a bomb dropped on the rows. However, the people of Great Yarmouth did get away lightly thanks to our gallant fighter pilots.

For all they suffered during the Great War the female population of Great Yarmouth should have been classed as national heroines. Nobody can realise how they suffered, but managed to carry on for five years. Some had families to care for and some were not so well but had to carry on. Some went out to work doing a man's job for less pay and after work had to rush home and get a meal ready for the family.

¹⁵¹ In fact two people died in Great Yarmouth that night of 19th January. A 53 year-old shoemaker named Samuel Smith and a 72 year-old widow, Martha Taylor

¹⁵² It is believed the Zeppelin actually dropped 10 bombs as well as the incendiary devices

¹⁵³ Sir Egbert Cadbury DSC, DFC, JP, DL (1893- 1967) was a member of the famed chocolate factory. He actually shot down two Zeppelins – in 1916 and 1918. He married Mary Forbes Phillips, the daughter of the vicar of Gorleston

¹⁵⁴ The Curtiss H-12 flying boat developed in the USA

Very early in the morning, some had to do the washing and hang it outside on a line. But when it was raining a line had to be put up in the kitchen after this she dashed off to work and rushed home for the tea. After tea they would do the house work and ironing and get the children off to bed. At the same time, she was worrying about their husband who was on active service.

Everyone was concerned for the safety of the family. All they had was the shelter of their own home in the rows. The biggest worry came from the Zeppelins and everyone worried in case a bomb was dropped on the rows.

Practically every night, warnings came Zeppelins were in the area and on no account must a light be seen outside. Fighters from the area and South Denes did a good job chasing the Zeppelins away. The entire coast was well guarded so Great Yarmouth did have some protection from the German fleet although sometimes they did get very close. My family and I suffered during the war but we managed to pull through with thanks to our neighbours. Great Yarmouth did rely on summer visitors and the fishing industry. But they were all very good, sound, honest working people.

Reedham

Quite a number of local people with their children were leaving the town and going to safer districts during the war. My mother, sisters, brother and I moved to Reedham and stayed with our grandmother - our mother's mother - who lived at number two Yare Cottages. It was situated near the riverside and was one in a terrace of six houses.

Each house had a very long garden at the front, which was the same width of the house and at the end of the garden was a three foot wall about fifty yards from the river bank. The river Yare was a very busy commercial river. From Great Yarmouth to Norwich and every day several ships including wherries in full sail would pass our house.

None of the houses were overlooked, as on the west side of the river, were miles of marshes, where cattle were grazing and not a house or building in sight. The only way the public could get across the river was at Reedham Ferry¹⁵⁵ and opposite the ferry was a lane to Loddon. My Aunt Lily would use this route every day and cycle to work where she was a barmaid in a hotel at Loddon. This was not a very pleasant way to work as there was no shelter against rain or gales, but she kept going every day. The ferry was over a mile from our house.

Sometimes at the weekend during the summer some of my pals and I would go up to Breydon to one of the drains and try butt grabbing¹⁵⁶. Sometimes we were lucky and did catch a few, which we gave away to one of the neighbours. They were good fish but were very hard to catch; we had plenty of fun catching them.

One day, we all undressed and put on our swimming clothes, leaving our clothes on a dry part, near the drain. We were enjoying ourselves too much as we forgot about the tide coming in and when we went to put our clothes on, they were wet, but we got all our clothes dry with running about so when we arrived home they were not so bad.

We had a good game, trying to leap from over the pillar box which was at the end of the conge on the quay.

One trick all the boys were good at, was climbing over the arches of Vauxhall Bridge, but when a policeman came we did not climb over as that is what he wanted us to do and would wait for us. But we all knew short cut, by dropping through part of the bridge which would land us on the river side. The policemen never caught any of us, but we had plenty of fun getting away from the bobby.

Sometimes we had a game of Crabbo¹⁵⁷ on the riverside. This game was a local game and we were all fairly good at it. Sometimes we played for a cigarette. When we were all quite young we played marbles in the rows, sometimes in the street. This was a good game but sometimes a policeman stopped us playing.

¹⁵⁵ A chain ferry for vehicles at Reedham and the only point cars can cross the Yare between Yarmouth and Norwich. There has been a ferry on the site since the 17th century and it was originally known as the Norfolk Horse Ferry as horses were its main passengers. Operated by hand formerly it was only motorised in 1950

¹⁵⁶ I confess George has me here. I can find no reference – beyond the crude and obvious – to butt grabbing though it sounds like catching fish by hand. The Butt is another name for the Turbot but – no pun intended – they are really a sea fish and don't seem the most likely candidate for snatching from the drains of Breydon

¹⁵⁷ For the second time on one page George flummoxes me. I can find no records relating to a game called Crabbo. It must be a very obscure local pastime. If anybody knows the rules....

We found it much different living in the country than living in the town. Here at Reedham everyone knew each other, and all the people I met were very nice and kind to me and all knew my family. And everyone asked about my mother. We had some very good neighbours, at number one was Mrs Chambers and at number three Mr and Mrs Edwards.

One thing we had to get used to was at Reedham we had no tap water, and all the water came from a pump or a well. We got our water from a well which was about fifty yards from our house. This well was used by three other families and sometimes we had to wait our turn in the rain or snow as only one could use the well at a time. The first time we used the well, I asked my grandmother what I could use the water for and she told me she kept two buckets in the pantry because it had a stone floor and the water kept cooler on a stone floor. We soon got used to using the well, it was experience for us. We had to lower the bucket down the well and the bucket was fastened to a chain or rope on a roller and when the bucket was filled we had to wind it to the top and carry two buckets of water and place them on the stone floor. The toilet had no running water and this was known as a dry toilet which was emptied twice a week very early in the morning by council workers.

Everything was on ration during the Great War and meat was very scarce, the butcher opened twice a week. My Grandmother was lucky; she bought a bullock's head which was nice because she kept it in the pantry with a stone floor where it kept fresh.

Another job I had was to go to a field near Reedham church and fetch two cows for Mr Boast¹⁵⁸ who had a Blacksmith's shop and some stables on the hill opposite the railway station. The cows had to be milked at a certain time and after milking I had to take the cows back to the field.

One day I was late going to the field. It was about one mile from Mr Boasts premises so I had to make the cows run; I did not want to get told off for being late. When the cows got back to Mr Boast I was thinking I had not done so badly as I was not late.

Mr Boast started shouting at me and saying what have you done to these cows, have you been running them? Because you have upset all of their milk. So he gave me the sack and shouted at me saying "get out of my sight I could kill you." One of my pals and I had a good job on Sundays when we came out of Sunday school. If the weather was fine several yachts came and moored at the quayside and we would ask one of the crew, did they want some water and most said yes, so we filled the water tank and we always got a tip.

Sometimes I would not go to school because I did not like Reedham school as the playground was all pebbles. My grandmother told Mr Cox¹⁵⁹ who was the landlord of Lord Nelson¹⁶⁰ I would not go to school and he told her he would make me go to school and he would bring his pony and trap and take me to school or else he would whip me. When he came to take me to school I went with him without the whip.

A railway bridge passes over the River Yare at Reedham, very close to The Ship Hotel¹⁶¹ and is a direct line to Lowestoft. The bridge is a swing bridge¹⁶² and is operated from the railway signal

¹⁵⁸ Harry Boast

¹⁵⁹ Albert Arthur Edward Cox was licensee of the Lord Nelson from February 1915 to April 1919

¹⁶⁰ Still trading, the Lord Nelson is a popular riverside pub

¹⁶¹ Another Reedham pub that has managed to survive the climate that has seen 145 Norfolk pubs close between 2010 and 2018

¹⁶² A swing bridge dating from 1902 that carries the Wherry Railway between Norwich and Lowestoft across the Yare. Prone to expanding in the heat and jamming in the closed position, it is often a frustration for boaters who cannot pass until the cool evening air allows the track to contract

box. When a ship on its way to Norwich, Cantley sugar factory¹⁶³ or across Breydon to Great Yarmouth, wanted to pass, the operators in the signal box would make sure no trains were due and the bridge would swing open and the ships would pass through and the bridge would close again after the ships were clear away.

When a train was due to pass over the river a red flag was hoisted to warn all shipping that the bridge was closed until the trains had passed over. Sometimes, a ship would be able to stop for a few minutes and everything would be OK and the bridge would swing open for business as usual.

Sometimes the bridge would open and let a yacht through with full sails and a fair wind. However, sometimes a yacht with full sails could not pass under the bridge and could not moor at the river side when the warning flag was flying. Only yachts with no sails and masts lowered or a rowing boat could get under the bridge. But sometimes a yacht was going too fast and did not have time to lower the mast and sails. The boat went bang under the bridge the sails and mast had smashed off. I have seen this happen several times.

During the spring I saw a large field which had a footpath leading to the railway station and the field was full of flowers; daffodils, tulips, and narcissus. The grower could not find a market for them owing to the war. So he gave all the local villagers permission to help themselves and clear the field which they did.

We did not have a bad time during our stay at Reedham and as soon as living in Great Yarmouth was not so dangerous we returned to our home at Row 21. Reedham has a memorial in memory of all those men who did not come back and were residents of Reedham. The first name I noticed was my mother's brother who was our Uncle George, Sgt George Powley R.G.A, DCM. He was the only native of Reedham who received an 'Honour' - The Distinguished Conduct Medal for bravery¹⁶⁴.

I don't know where the medal has gone. The last time I saw it was at my grandmother's house with his photo. Up to the time of her death, I was the oldest male in the family of three sisters, it should have gone to me and then to my oldest male at my death.

I had a job during harvest when the only means of transport was the horse and I got a job as a 'Hollo Hold Ye'¹⁶⁵.

During the summer holiday I, with one or two of my pals, would go to Wellesley Recreation Ground tennis courts to act as ball boys for some of the players. Sometimes we would be able to get two games during the evening and two of us would be given six pence for each game. This is how we got some spending money. We spent most of the money when we went to the pictures. None of my pals got much money from their parents as all the families were poor working class people from the rows, but we managed to get along with what we earned until we were old enough to leave school.

I remember one episode which nearly landed my three pals and I in court. There is a very old saying "Boys will be boys" and one evening, after we had been ball boys on the Wellesley courts, we got into some trouble on our way home. We grabbed our pal who was trying to be clever.

¹⁶³ The sugar beet processing factory at Cantley was built by the Dutch in 1912 but is now owned by British Sugar

¹⁶⁴ Alfred George Powley (1887-1918) was killed in action near Ypres on 14th October 1918 and is commemorated at Aeroplane Cemetery

¹⁶⁵ Probably the same as "Haller hold yew" which is Norfolk dialect for "Holler hold you" or in other words, it was his job to shout at the horse and stop it from running off

I got hold of his head and another got his feet and the third gave us a lift and we threw him over the hedge of the corner house of Wellesley Road and Euston Road. We all got a lot of fun doing this but next morning when we went to school our teacher told the four of us we had to go to the police station. When we got there, we were taken to the Chief Constable's office and we were asked by the Chief if we threw a boy over the fence into the garden the previous evening. We all said, "Yes Sir we are very sorry." He gave us all a warning, if we did it again he would send us to Borstal, but we saved ourselves by telling the truth. He said he was very upset as he had been trying to get some roses for ten years but we cut them down "And boys will be boys". His name was Chief Constable Ben Smith¹⁶⁶.

Football

I was very pleased and proud when I was selected to play football for my school Hospital Boys' senior team for which I played until I left school at the age of fourteen. The schools at Great Yarmouth and Gorleston played football against each other in the school leagues. The matches were always played on Saturday mornings during the football season.

The Yarmouth schools home ground was The Beaconsfield recreation ground and Gorleston recreation ground on the side pitches. The teams consisted of Priory school, Hospital school, Northgate, St James, Nelson, Cobholm, Edwards Worlledge, Church Road and Stradbroke Road.

Mr Farrant¹⁶⁷ was games master for Hospital school. There was always great rivalry between Priory and Hospital schools which always attracted a large crowd. Hospital school had a good team and always finished near the top, they won the league once.

The teachers at Hospital school were Mr Spanton¹⁶⁸ the Headmaster, Mr Farrant Head Teacher and taught standard seven and ex-seven. Mr Cox¹⁶⁹ taught standard six, Mr Chambers¹⁷⁰ standard five, Mr Amies¹⁷¹ standard four and Mrs Saul¹⁷² the lower classes. I was proud of myself and also of the team, when I was selected to play football for Yarmouth boys against Gorleston boys. This was an annual event and was played on Boxing Day Morning on Wellesley Recreation Ground. It always had a very large crowd with plenty of booing and cheering from the rival spectators. Yarmouth and Gorleston were always great rivals. It was frightening at first to play in front of a large crowd, but I got used to it as the game progressed.

While I was still attending school, I received another honour, I was selected to play for Great Yarmouth and Gorleston Schools football team against various other towns' schools' football

¹⁶⁶ A former Nottingham police officer, Benjamin William Smith (Bon 1880) was appointed Great Yarmouth's Chief Constable in July 1918. He left the Nottingham force in 1914 as a Detective Sergeant to be a Chief Inspector at Yarmouth.

¹⁶⁷ John William Farrant was born in 1882 and became a schoolmaster including a spell as games teacher at the Hospital school. Despite poor health, he was a local referee and chair of the Yarmouth Charity Football Committee. He served as a Quartermaster Sergeant in the Royal Defence Corps during World War One but was hospitalised with pneumonia and bronchial disease. By 1939 he was headmaster at an elementary school. Farrant died in 1953.

¹⁶⁸ Benjamin W. Spanton (1857-1927) was headmaster at the Hospital school for 42 years retiring in September 1919

¹⁶⁹ Henry J. Cox (1877-1951) was headmaster at the Hospital School by 1937

¹⁷⁰ Frederick William Chambers (1862-1940)

¹⁷¹ Walter Sidney Amies was born 1879 and was retired by 1939

¹⁷² Probably either Alice May Saul (1882-1963) or her sister Ethel Mary Saul (1883-1921) who were both teachers in the town

teams. We played Lowestoft boys, Kings Lynn boys and Norwich boys in the English Boys Cup. After playing for Great Yarmouth boys, I was entitled to wear the town's badge on a blazer.

When I left school, the first team I played for was Great Yarmouth third eleven in the Great Yarmouth and district second division which we won in 1926. These matches were played on Saturdays on Beaconsfield Recreation Ground.

On Thursdays I played on the same ground for Great Yarmouth police team, we always had a big crowd watching us, hoping we would lose. Sometimes I did get plenty of abuse, calling me a policeman's nark, but this did not worry me as I was trying to play football. We had a very good team including a very good goalkeeper, his name was Edgar Calthorpe¹⁷³.

There were only two civilians in the police team; myself and Blido Blyth¹⁷⁴. He lived with his parents in a public house, which was situated on Southtown Road between Colman's¹⁷⁵ and Fellows shipyard¹⁷⁶. Its name was the Anson Arms¹⁷⁷.

I was a member of the police billiards club and had to pass through the police station across the yard up some steps into the billiards room. I considered myself highly honoured but my objective was to join the police force. Unfortunately I could not make the height required of six feet, I could only make five feet ten inches after all the exercise. I was sadly disappointed as my ambition was to become a policeman, and I did get plenty of encouragement.

I had a very good time while I played for Great Yarmouth police. They were all very good pals and when I was unfortunate of being out of work at Christmas, all the team made a collection amongst them and bought some Christmas fare for my mother and family. I thought this was a wonderful gesture as it was all done by themselves and all the rest of the team knew about it except me. That's the kind of police we had in those days at Yarmouth.

Although I played football for several years and for quite a number of teams, I shall always remember one occasion. I had played on Thursday for the Police, on Saturday for the GER (Great Eastern Railways) and on Sunday which was when I received an injury to my leg. I could hardly walk and I was advised to see the police trainer who he said to me "We want you to play on Thursday, as we have got a stiff match and we want a full team out." He examined my leg, manipulated it, bandaged it with Scotch dressing¹⁷⁸ and said you will be alright tomorrow and I was. I thought it was magic. I think the trainer's name was Charlie Hacon.

As we were not playing football for any team on Sunday, it was a day of rest. No team played league matches on Sunday but about twenty lads from the Howard Street and George Street area made two teams and played each other on the donkey pitch. This was not a football pitch but a grass area on North Drive between Beaconsfield and Salisbury Road. We had some good matches as we were great rivals.

¹⁷³ From south of the border in Suffolk, Edgar John W. Calthorpe (1913-1986) was the son of a local councillor – also Edgar – Stow Upland

¹⁷⁴ Probably George Herbert Blythe (1906-1980) son of Isaac Blythe, a marine engineer and stationary engine driver who took the licence of the Anson Arms in 1917 and held it until 1941. George went on the railways and was a fireman

¹⁷⁵ J & J Colman of Norwich – the food manufacturers best known for their mustard – acquired the old armoury on Southtown Road in 1891 and used it for storage.

¹⁷⁶ The Southtown shipyard was first established by James Lovewell in 1811 when he dug Yarmouth's first dry dock. It passed to the Fellows family after his death in 1824. It was sold to Everard then to Richards in 1970 and although the old wooden dry dock was decommissioned in 2012, there is still a yard on the site today

¹⁷⁷ On the Southtown Road, it was built in 1814 on land owned by the Anson family. It closed in 2010

¹⁷⁸ Strips of lint with green ointment and a smell like eucalyptus.

Sometimes a policeman, who was on that beat, would stop us playing but it made no difference as we moved to North Denes and had some very good matches there, on Sunday afternoons.

I continued to play for the Police on Thursdays, but I did not play for Great Yarmouth third eleven on Saturdays. I played for GER for one season in the Great Yarmouth and District league, first division. We had quite a good team and I got on well with all the players. We were all good pals, and finished near to the top of the league.

The GER entered for the Railway Directors Cup, only railway teams were allowed to enter for this cup. We were drawn to play Stratford at Stratford London, and we trained very hard for this match. However, when we played we missed chances and lost. We had a wonderful match, and we were considered very unlucky to lose, I think playing at home was an advantage but it is all in the game. The home tea supporters gave us a good reception. We were very disappointed we lost, but we all remained good team mates. I shall always remember the wonderful day out we had.

We were treated as heroes and had a good meal after the match and a drink or two, but we were all ready when the train arrived to bring us back to Yarmouth. This was my first full day out so I can remember every detail. I know when we were waiting to be served with a drink, one of the lads became sick and he let the side down.

As I could not get a regular job on the railway, I found another firm who offered me regular employment which I was very pleased to accept.

After my resignation from the GER team at the end of the season, I played for Great Yarmouth reserve which played all home matches on the Wellesley recreation ground. We played in the Norwich and District league. This was a very good league, which consisted of many good teams and was a much higher standard than I had played before. This did not worry me as we had a good team and we were all confident we could do well. We played well but did not win the league; we finished very high in the order and were good contenders though. In this league, all the teams could enter for the Norfolk Junior Cup which was an annual event.

Great Yarmouth reserves played very well in every round and won home or away, we were in the final which took place on Easter Monday morning at Norwich on Norwich City Ground - The Nest¹⁷⁹. Norwich City were called the Canaries. This was very appropriate as the ground was like a bird's nest with Norwich City shirts being yellow and green which fell in with the colour of the birds.

I had been to watch City on several occasions and it was not a nice ground to play on as, at one of the grounds, was a brick wall not very far from the goal line and was the entire width of the playing field. The spectators at the end of the ground were looking down at the pitch, so when a player came rushing towards the wall he had to be very careful. So, when we played it was an advantage to have been at the nest previously.

I played for Great Yarmouth reserves in the final of the Norfolk Junior Cup¹⁸⁰ at the nest on Easter Monday 1930 and won, which was a great achievement. We received the Norfolk Junior Cup Medal.

¹⁷⁹ Norwich's ground in Rosary Road where they played from 1908-1935 before moving to Carrow Road

¹⁸⁰ County Cup competition established in the 1889/90 season

During 1931/2 season I played several times for Great Yarmouth first team and I remember one match in particular, for this is the one I should try not to forget. We were playing at home, on the Wellesley recreation ground against Cromer in a round of the Norfolk Senior Cup. We had a good team including Billie Dennis in goal, Bob Randall at right back, myself left back, Tich Goslin, Alec Brow, Charlie Moore, Porky Beevor, Charlie Hubbard, Jerry High, Cecil Hulley and Billie Cropper.

This was the worst game I played in my football life and one I cannot forget. Cromer had a man playing outside right. He was very clever at ball control and he was so good he was beating practically all the team with his skill. I had to go in and tackle him and accidentally fouled him for which most of the crowd booed me. I had to stop him somehow, for he was giving me the run around and the entire crowd was cheering him. It was alright in the end, we did win.

I did not get on very well with the Yarmouth supporters so, the next year I played for Gorleston and played against Great Yarmouth in the George Cup final at Gorleston. I played right half against Charlie Moore and Porky Beevor and during the match I was told, by these two, I only played for Gorleston so I could play dirty against them. Great Yarmouth beat Gorleston 2-1 it was a great game and we were unlucky.

I enjoyed playing for Gorleston, all the players were friendly and some were very good players. The best ones were Joe Jobling who turned professional and played for Charlton Athletic and also Bert Brown who also turned professional. Two outstanding goalkeepers were Bert Hunn and Dick Campling¹⁸¹. Dick was a very good goal keeper on roller skates when he played in the roller skating football team on the Wellington Pier Winter Gardens.

I lived very close to Gorleston Rec and was able to do plenty of training. I lived at number two Baliol Road.

While I was playing for Gorleston, one match stands out in my memory. It was when we played away at Trowbridge, Wiltshire, in the FA Cup Match. We had quite a long journey; we left Gorleston by coach on Friday afternoon and arrived at Windsor on Friday evening. We stayed at a very good hotel near the bridge which passed over the river at Windsor. We all had a good evening and were ready for the journey to Trowbridge on Saturday morning. We were all looking forward to the match and had a good game; we were well received by very sporting home supporters.

We played very well but we lost 2-1 and were very unlucky. We got a very good write up in the Trowbridge local paper which I kept with all my paper cuttings and football photos which, unfortunately, I lost during the war. We arrived back at the hotel in Windsor and stayed Saturday night and had a very pleasant time.

On Sunday morning I got up early and did not wait for breakfast. I went for a good walk around the gardens, Windsor castle and church which was wonderful. I was surprised that I was allowed to roam around wherever I wanted to go and not stopped, although plenty of guards were on duty. Every time I passed a guard I was met with the same salutation "Good Morning Sir". After my walk, I made my way back to the hotel where all the team and officials were waiting for me. I did not mind a telling off because I did have a wonderful experience.

¹⁸¹ Richard Walter P. Campling (1904-1982 but better known as Dick. Was Gorleston's goalkeeper for several years and after Bert Brown one of their better known players. In the fifties he was Gorleston's trainer

We then started our journey back to Gorleston with one or two songs and arrived back at the starting point at 3.00 pm. We all had a very good time before we left we had a hand shake all round. And we were all sorry we lost, but we brought back with us some happy memories.

I played several times for Gorleston reserves and the only success we had in winning a trophy was in 193 –32 when we played at Holt in the final of the Kelling Sanatorium Cup which we won and each member of the team received a replica cup.

I finished my football career playing for Jewson's and we had a very good team. The first pitch Jewson's had was at Andrews on Cobholm Island; it was not a bad football pitch but was a bit rough. It was part of Andrew's farm. We moved from Cobholm to Southtown Common where we had a good pitch and our own dressing room in about 1926/7. We had a team playing in each of the 1st and 2nd leagues of the Yarmouth and district leagues.

During 1986 a photo of Jewson's team was in the Yarmouth Mercury and a lady had her father in the photo. She wanted someone to recognise all the members in the photo, but no one in Great Yarmouth could oblige. My sister saw me on the photo so she sent the cutting from the paper to me and asked if I could name all on the photo which I did. It was a photo of Jewson's team and it was taken on Southtown Common with thirty five players and officials in about 1927–8.

The person who put the photo in the Mercury got in touch with me and was very pleased to know I made her family happy, her father was on the photo and he was a very great friend of mine.

And there end George's memories of growing up on Great Yarmouth. A very detailed and evocative account. I hope you enjoyed reading it as much as we did preparing it.